

Appendix 2

The Strategic Housing service review staff engagement process

Email to whole team from Julia Hedger, Group Manager – Wednesday 1 May 2013

An initial email was sent to inform the team of the commencement of the service review, providing key messages:

- *The purpose of the service review is to improve the Council's service to achieve the prevention of homelessness and provide clear housing advice to applicants as early as possible in order to support them to manage their housing situation.*
- *The aim is to work towards a service based on quality, which is deliverable on a daily basis.*
- *The review is not about losing any posts with the team.*
- *There will be a commitment to long-term training plans recognised as essential if officers are to be successful in delivering the necessary service.*
- *Team meetings over the next couple of months will allow officers to have the opportunity to discuss the review and to be part of the conversations and developments over the course of the process.*

Whole Team Meeting – Monday 13 May 2013

Each team gave a presentation on their service area, including both team leader and officer presentations.

Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director, attended to comment on the service review being carried out as part of the Homelessness Strategy.

From the minutes: "EB requested that the review is not just top-down, and that staff take the opportunity to make their suggestions on any improvements that can be made to improve the front line service."

Team leader planning session – Thursday 16 May 2013

An afternoon planning session was held out of the office with team leaders Teresa Wood, Isabel Connolly and Natasha Brathwaite attending.

Service review email "Getting ready for the Gold Standard" – Thursday 16 May 2013

Staff were asked to get into pairs and provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) *What are the qualities in the department that make it high performing?*
- 2) *Are there particular things you can identify that we are really good at?*
- 3) *How could we make even more of what we're good at?*
- 4) *Do you have other skills that you would like to use at work to make a positive difference?*

Good feedback was received from all pairs.

Housing Options Team strategy session – 21 May 2013

A team session called "Feeding into the homelessness strategy" was held with the Housing Options Team to provide an overview of the strategic objectives and aims of the service review.

Service review email “Getting ready for the Gold Standard - the service review and why it's so important” – Monday 10 June 2013

Three information sheets were prepared specially for the service review and emailed to staff.

Housing Options Team strategy follow-up sessions – 12 and 20 June 2013

A follow-up session was held to discuss the on-going service review and Homelessness Strategy developments with the Housing Options Team. From this session the team requested and arranged an away morning out of the office to brainstorm ideas to feed into the service review.

Housing Advice and Homelessness strategy session – 20 June 2013

A team session was held to discuss the service review with specific focus on the primary prevention of homelessness as households approach the Council in housing need.

Strategy and Private Sector Housing Team strategy session – 21 June 2013

A team session was held to discuss the service review in the context of team specific changes around the delivery of the Council's private rented sector access scheme.

Whole Team Meeting – Monday 24 June 2013

A whole team meeting was held, with the following initial agenda item:

1. Service review

Introduction from Julia

Discussion with staff to go through:

- *Feedback from team strategy sessions so far*
- *Information to staff about job swaps*

Job swaps – 1 July 2013 to 6 September 2013

First week 1 – 5 July 2013

Debrief sessions with the 'job swap teams' were held during 8 July 2013

Second week 29 July – 2 August 2013

Debrief sessions with the 'job swap teams' were held during 5 August 2013

Third week 2 – 6 September 2013

Team away-day with housing consultant – Wednesday 11 September 2013

The whole team received an interactive all-day session with a housing consultant on national good practice and new ways of working in housing and homelessness.

Team meeting to discuss results of the team review and proposed new structure – Monday 16 September 2013

A whole team meeting was held to provide an opportunity for staff to feedback as part of an informal consultation on the proposal for a new team structure.

Team meeting to commence formal 30 day consultation process – Monday 28 October 2013

A whole team meeting was held by Julia Hedger and attended by Strategic Housing's Human Resources representative. Detail of the formal consultation was provided and set out in letters provided to all officers and team leaders within Strategic Housing. An opportunity was provided for questions to be asked and for the full detail of the proposed changes to be discussed.

Appendix 3

Strategic Housing 'job swaps' – staff feedback

After each week of job swaps officers across the Strategic Housing service were asked to respond to a number of questions. Examples of the responses are provided below. The success of these weeks and the responses were considered as part of the second stage of the homelessness service review.

Please provide an example of something you have learnt that you will be able to take back with you to your job:

I have learnt how much shared information we have on applicants which is available to all of us via our systems, I can now ask my colleagues from other teams and check our database instead of a time consuming back-and-forwards letter process to applicants.

As the only member of my team that remained in the section, I believe that I played a key role in ensuring that all the usual targets were met. In turn this encouraged me to problem-solve without the usual support of my teammates.

Flexibility in where I work and who I work with.

I am now able to talk with confidence about the process of seeking housing through the housing register, and can give people a good idea of what to expect when they do so. I am also able to explain to people how their points work, and can offer advice to people who may be on the wrong points.

I have a greater understanding of what is asked on the housing register application form that will make it easier to get reports from the system to inform our service.

I feel that I can now navigate and use the system to look up information on applicant's documents they have sent in for another department.

Please provide an example of teamwork within your job swap team:

Working with two colleagues assessing applications, we all had shared knowledge and skills to bring to the process (housing law and acts, plus knowledge of external agencies), which made it a rounded process and much quicker than a normal application. We were able to supply the customer with a solution that I wouldn't have reached just by myself.

Different teams supported each other to learn new things and were not worried or concerned to try new things and ask questions, which led to a more positive attitude generally.

The team have worked really well to support each other during this week and work has been shared out fairly, there has been a willingness to answer queries and ensure that the week has been successful.

We delegated roles and responsibilities fairly, and throughout the week we monitored each other's progress and where necessary provided additional support.

A colleague doing the job swap sat in on an interview with me and gave input around the housing register. We had discussions about the work we do and supported each other.

Team leaders were working closer with their teams. Individuals were working together in each of the job swap teams to learn new tasks. The week gave individuals in the department a chance to get to know individuals in different teams.

I saw teams who normally work separately working on the same thing to achieve shared goals.

It was good to work with people from the department that I haven't worked with directly before as part of a team.

The team were totally committed to this week and worked really well together, there was a lot of support to each other with the work that they were doing and also checking what each other had done against procedure to ensure tasks were done correctly.

Using your learning from the job swaps please suggest how you think the service and staff roles in the future could be shaped going forward:

In regards to the housing register, I feel that a rota timetable of work/roles would make a difference to the team. This change would enable the team to focus on one task at a time, as I found there were a lot of different tasks to complete on a daily basis.

Having seen staff recognising the contributions of their colleagues more it could now be useful to visibly display what part of the 'customer journey' each team contributes to.

Focus on certain areas each day / different staff to focus on certain areas. Link housing options service with housing advice and homelessness.