



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

7 November 2013

**Title:** Moving Forward Customer Training Programme 2013/14 – Update – April to September 2013

**Report of:** Managing Director

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide a six month update on the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme for 2013/14.

### Background

2. The Involvement and Empowerment Standard of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)'s Regulatory Framework places a requirement on landlords to provide support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved. Previous successes have seen attendees going on to join Service Improvement Groups, take part in mystery shopping and become members of the Board.
3. The Moving Forward training programme offers many customers a chance to develop their skills and capacity, with the aim of getting more involved with other activities across the company. This programme has expanded and adapted each year based on the needs of tenants and the issues currently affecting people living in our homes.
4. The programme has previously been identified as positive practice and we have shared our experiences of delivering the programme with a number of organisations.

### Summary

5. Courses are delivered by a range of providers including B&Q, Gateshead Council, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Health Works and The Gateshead Housing Company.
6. The programme combines a range of scheduled with demand led sessions. This flexible approach has shown to be an effective way to engage our customers in training and building practical skills, helping them to become actively involved in shaping services or to use these skills in other parts of their lives.
7. The programme is open to all tenants and leaseholders with the new programme being sent via the company newspaper reaching nearly 21,000 homes. In addition to this, targeted promotion is carried out through community

organisations, at events, in housing offices and through officer networks. The courses are also featured in Gateshead Council's Learning and Skills directory, which is sent to all residents of Gateshead throughout the year. This wider promotion has resulted in an increased interest in courses and less need for targeted work to generate attendance.

### **Current Position**

8. Providing training and support to customers appropriate to their needs is a service standard for the company. The current target is for 180 attendees to access the Moving Forward training during 2013/14. This includes attendance at courses provided through the training programme as well as any external conferences or seminars we may support customers to attend.
9. A total of 8 courses have been delivered during the period 1 April to 30 September 2013. There have been a total of 84 customers attending the training, which is an average attendance of 11 people per course. This is an increase of 3 people per course compared to the same time last year.
10. Appendix 1 highlights attendee information from 1 April to 30 September 2013 and comparison data for the 2012/13 programme.
11. To date, five demand led courses have taken place this year: -
  - Meeting skills and being Chair
  - Spot the scam
  - How to manage your money
  - Drug and alcohol awareness
  - Managing your stress (full day).
12. Although the 'Spot the scam' course is scheduled the programme, due to popular demand an additional session was delivered in May, to recognise Adult Learner's Week and Scam Awareness Month. Delivered by Gateshead Council's Trading Standards, this proved to be very popular with 17 attendees, highlighting the concerns of residents on this issue.

### **Feedback from attendees**

13. An evaluation form is distributed at the end of each course to help us gather valuable feedback. The evaluation now gathers profile information which helps us to improve our understanding of who is accessing the training. Appendix 2 highlights the profile information of attendees during the period 1 April – 30 September.
14. Satisfaction figures are based on 81 responses, with 100% of attendees satisfied overall with the course they attended. Appendix 3 shows the results for satisfaction responses of the courses during the period 1 April to 30 September 2013 and some of the specific comments made by attendees.

## **Training with Mears**

15. In partnership with Mears we have delivered a programme of practical sessions to help build skills in areas including painting and decorating, plumbing and electrics.
16. This was a pilot project open to tenants and leaseholders of the housing company, and was held at Gateshead College Construction Campus, due to established links Mears already have with them. The project was scheduled to run for one day per week over a course of eight weeks.
17. The sessions were similar to those delivered by B&Q, but offered a more in-depth look at each subject as they were full day courses and therefore allowed time to be more 'hands on'. This helped attendees gain more confidence in carrying out practical tasks.
18. A commitment was required from attendees to go to each lesson, rather than selecting one-off sessions, to help develop a more rounded skills set and enable us to gather a more in-depth evaluation of the project.
19. Due to a staffing issue at the college, the Carpentry and Joinery sessions were unable to take place as scheduled which has resulted in a delay in evaluating the programme. A full evaluation will be taking place following this report, to learn from this project and help any future programmes that may take place.

## **Future plans**

20. The company has recently secured repeat funding to deliver Energy Best Deal (EBD) training to vulnerable tenants and leaseholders to help ensure they are on the best energy deal for them, aiming to avoid tenants and leaseholders going into fuel poverty.
21. This training will be delivered between October 2013 and March 2014. Three officers across the Involvement, Rent and Income team and the Environmental management group will be delivering these sessions. Front line officers who did not attend last year's briefing or would like further training, will be able to access the information to enable them to signpost customers accordingly who require further support in this area.
22. Learning from last year's EBD sessions, we are currently planning how to effectively promote this opportunity to our more vulnerable customers who are likely to benefit from this training.
23. A further update will be provided in the next Moving Forward committee report once we have started delivering the training.

## **Link to values**

24. This report relates to the company values of:
  - Being customer focused, innovative and professional
  - Being a listening and learning organisation
  - Embracing Equality.

## **Impact on tenants**

25. Offering a range of free courses where customers can build their skills and capacity is an example of how the company empowers customers to develop and support further involvement with the company.
26. The practical courses offered by B&Q provide tenants and leaseholders with the skills to make small improvements themselves and take pride in their homes, potentially reducing the impact on the HomeRepairs team.
27. Tenants have the opportunity throughout the year to offer suggestions of new courses which are then considered in the planning of the next programme.

## **Risk Management Implications**

28. Failure to engage with tenants was identified as a strategic risk for the company. Through delivery of the training programme we ensure that we are offering a range of opportunities for our tenants and leaseholders to do this, which in turn supports the Involvement and Empowerment standard, set out within the HCA's regulatory framework.

## **Financial Implications**

29. The Head of Corporate Services confirms that a budget is available to support customer involvement and resources have been made available from this budget to support the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme.
30. External funding has been secured from Skills for Life, where we receive approximately £3.95 per person per hour of learning for capacity building courses. There is now a restriction on the amount of funding we receive of £624, for the academic year 1 September to 31 August, rather than the financial year the company works to.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

31. The company has a commitment to valuing diversity and ensures all customers have the opportunity to access the courses within the programme.
32. Every effort is made to ensure we do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any individual or group and we provide equal access to this service.
33. The equality impact assessment was reviewed and updated for the 2013/14 programme to ensure that it continues to be accessible to all. Through collection of profile information from the evaluation form we can build a better picture of who is attending the training and if there are any groups that are particularly under-represented to identify future actions.
34. Appendix 3 shows profile information collected for the first six months of the programme and shows that there are more women than men accessing our training and 37.04% are disabled. The majority of attendees are white British (74.08%) and the age group 60-74 is the most common for attendees, followed by 25-39 and 50-69 (18.52%).

## **Environmental implications**

32. The programme offers a course relating to environmental awareness, aiming to reduce fuel poverty called 'Saving energy and money'.
33. In addition, we are due to deliver more Energy Best Deal sessions to customers who want to try and save money on their fuel bills and understand how to reduce negative impacts on the environment. Outcomes of this will be reported in the Moving Forward annual review committee report.

## **Health implications**

34. Feedback from customers has told us that attendees feel a direct health improvement from attending our courses in building their confidence through socialising with other people, learning and developing new skills.
35. Specifically we have delivered a 'Managing Stress' course during this period which aims to reduce the levels of stress among our tenants, leaseholders and residents in Gateshead and ultimately improve their health and wellbeing.
36. In addition the 'Spot the scam' course aims to help people reduce stress and anxiety and minimise the potential of falling victim to a scam. This is scheduled to be delivered in November as many people are targeted by fraudsters in the lead up to Christmas, which can lead to serious financial pressures and can in turn impact on their mental health.

## **Value for Money Implications**

37. When developing the programme each year, we work with tenants and leaseholders to identify the best way to deliver and promote the programme in a cost effective way.
38. By offering demand led courses it ensures that they are run when there is a high level of attendance, rather than committing resources to a session where there is little or no take up by customers.
38. The current programme was sent to all tenants and leaseholders as part of May's company newspaper, meaning only design and print costs of £900 were incurred. The cost of promoting the programme in this way is significantly less than through a separate publication like previous years, which cost approximately £4000 to reach the same number of people.

## **Consultation carried out**

39. Customers were involved in consultations to develop the 2013/14 programme around the content, design and the selection of the trainer for capacity building courses. An updated design was launched this year, continuing the branding of Opportunity Knocks.
40. Satisfaction with the programme is reported to the Involvement Service Improvement group where any areas of dissatisfaction can be discussed and addressed. The Involvement SIG approved the 2013/14 programme and was impressed with the new design.

## **Recommendation**

41. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the impact on customers to date from the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme.

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Contact: Helen Watson, Involvement and Diversity Officer    Tel No. (0191) 433 5376

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**Table 1: Comparison figures for the first half of the programme for 2013/14 and 2012/13**

	2013/14		2012/13	
	Scheduled Courses	Demand led courses	Scheduled courses	Demand led courses
<b>Number of courses held</b>	3	5	5	6
<b>Total of Attendees</b>	33	51	44	43
<b>External funding received</b>	n/a	£145.30*	n/a	£478.70

\*This will be issued in December along with amount due for the current academic term (September-December). The company will receive a maximum contract value of £624 for the academic year 2012/13, therefore we can only receive the difference of £145.30 following the amount already received in 2012/13.

**Table 2: Courses held and attendees for Moving Forward programme 2013/14 and 2012/13**

2013/14		2012/13	
Course Title	Attendees	Course Title	Attendees
Meeting skills and being Chair	14	Understanding health improvement	9
Spot the scam	17	Gardening	10
Gardening	12	Plumbing	11
How to manage your money	8	Improve your health	11
Plumbing	9	Help with employment	7
Drug and alcohol awareness	5	Dealing with stress	8
Basic DIY	12	Basic DIY	5
Managing your stress (full day)	7	Social media made simple	5, 8
		Confidence building	7
		Checking our services (mystery shopping)	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>

**Table 1: Profile of attendees 1 April to 30 September 2013**

<b>Gender</b>		
Male	24	29.63%
Female	57	70.37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Disability</b>		
Disabled	30	37.04%
Non disabled	47	58.02
Unknown/blank	4	4.94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Ethnic origin</b>		
Asian Pakistan	2	2.47%
Asian Other	3	3.70%
Chinese	6	7.41%
Black African	-	-
Mixed Other	5	6.17%
White British	60	74.08%
White Other	3	3.70%
Unknown/blank	2	2.47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Under 25	2	2.47%
25-39	15	18.52%
40-49	9	11.11%
50-59	15	18.52%
60-74	34	41.98%
75 and over	3	3.70%
Unknown/blank	3	3.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Table 1: Responses to questions for those who answered ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied for courses during the period 1 April – 30 September 2013**

	Question	Satisfaction Response – ‘Very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied	
		Yes	No
1	How satisfied are you with the course organisation?	100%	
2	How satisfied are you with the facilities?	96.30%	
3	How satisfied are you with the length of the course?	98.77%	
4	How satisfied are you with the trainer?	98.77%	
5	How satisfied are you with the course content?	97.53%	
		Yes	No
6	Did you find anything in the course racist, sexist or offensive in any way?	-	100%
7	From the skills and knowledge you’ve gained in this course could you apply them in your day to day life?	97.53%	2.47%
8	Did the course meet your expectations?	96.30%	2.47%
9	How satisfied are you with the opportunities to get involved today?	100%	
10	Overall, how satisfied are you with the course today?	100%	

**Customer comments from courses:**

- *“Thoroughly enjoyed the course it was well structures and I learnt a lot. Thank you”, Meeting Skills and being Chair*
- *“Courses have been excellent. All staff are brilliant, courses are very informative. Good work”, Spot the scam*
- *“Brilliant course I could not improve – only more of them”, Gardening*
- *“I am not so scared to deal with my problems”, How to manage your money*
- *“I enjoyed this course it is very important to me”, Plumbing*
- *“Learnt a lot”, Drug and alcohol awareness*
- *“Learnt skills I can apply and do myself”, Basic DIY*
- *“Enjoyable, beneficial course well worthwhile”, Managing your stress (full day).*