



Report to the Customers and Communities Committee

6 November 2014

Title: Moving Forward Customer Training Programme 2014/15 – Update

Report of: Involvement and Diversity Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide a six month update on the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme for 2014/15.

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 TALISMAN and 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. In addition the company supports tenants and leaseholders to attend external conferences and seminars which can help develop their skills and knowledge to support them in their involvement in shaping services.

Moving Forward - Summary

5. Moving Forward courses are delivered by a range of providers including B&Q, TPAS, Health Works and The Gateshead Housing Company. Most recently we have hosted a training course delivered through the government funded body Tenant Central.
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. There are eight scheduled courses in this year's programme compared to seven last year. This now includes two decorating and two health awareness courses due to popular demand.
8. In addition we have offered an additional full day health awareness session following feedback from customers who requested a more in-depth session around this subject.

Current Position

9. A total of 6 Moving Forward courses have been delivered during the period 1 April to 30 September 2014. There have been a total of 46 customers attending the training, which is an average of 8 people per course.
10. Appendix 1 highlights attendee information from 1 April to 30 September 2014 and comparison data for the 2013/14 programme.
11. To date, three demand led courses have taken place this year: -
 - Meeting skills and being Chair - TPAS
 - Managing a project – Tenant Central
 - Let's get digital, digital - TGHC
12. A further two demand led courses, Managing stress and Confidence building, are booked to take place before 31 December 2014.
13. A 'Gardening' course scheduled to take place in the first half of the year as the training provided was unable to deliver this, however this has been rescheduled for later in the year. This has therefore had an impact on the attendance figures during this period.
14. Following a successful pilot and as part of our commitment to help more residents access our services online, we will continue to hold digital drop ins across Gateshead to help develop their skills and become more digitally able and reduce the potential risk of isolation by increasing communication links.

Feedback from attendees

15. An evaluation form is distributed at the end of each course to help us gather valuable feedback. The evaluation 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.
16. Attendees of the 'Let's get digital, digital' drop in completed a different survey due to it being a pilot session.
17. 89.74% of attendees were satisfied overall with the course they attended. Satisfaction has dipped compared to this point last year and is due to some attendees of the Basic DIY and decorating courses expecting it to be more 'hands on'. Feedback has been shared with the training provider so that this will be addressed for future sessions.

18. 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. Appendix 4 shows the feedback received to date from the digital drop in pilot.

Let's Get Digital

19. In this period, we delivered our pilot Let's Get Digital drop in session. The aim of these sessions is to increase the number of tenants and leaseholders able to access online services but through a very informal setting.
20. Prior to coming to the session, the involvement team spoke to individuals about what their objectives for attending would be. This helped to ensure that officers were equipped to deal with their queries. Objectives ranged from having an initial try of using a computer through to wanting to be able to access housing company and council services online.
21. Six people attended this session and feedback was very positive with attendees stating they were very satisfied with the session and felt they had achieved their aims. They also confirmed that they would be interested in attending further sessions if they were made available in the future.

External Training

22. Tenants and leaseholders have attended a number of external training events during this six month period.
23. Members of TALISMAN have taken part in the following: -
- TPAS Annual Conference
 - Trafford Hall – Scrutiny Skills
 - TPAS E-learning – Scrutiny Skills
 - TPAS Scrutiny Lounge
24. These sessions have helped support both existing and new members of the panel to further develop their skills to carry out thorough reviews of our services.
25. In addition two Board members have attended a course titled 'All on Board' aimed to equip new board members with skills and knowledge to help them take on the role of being a Board Director.
26. A further two tenants were supported to attend a session at Trafford Hall on Community Engagement aimed at providing information and advice on how to make groups more representative.

Future plans

27. The company will continue to deliver Let's Get Digital drop ins, with the aim of increasing the amount of tenants and leaseholders who can access online services.

28. Increasing our customers' digital skills will also help to support those who will be affected by Universal Credit as this will require customers to access these services online, thus reducing the potential impact of isolation from this.
29. We will continue to offer Energy Best Deal advice sessions to customers who have expressed an interest, to help reduce fuel poverty and increase potential disposable income of our residents. We will be linking in these sessions with the opportunity for tenants and leaseholders to compare and switch their tariffs using Energy Angels.

Link to values

30. 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

31. 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.
32. 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 Home**Repairs** team. This can also help to improve the quality of the minor works they undertake.
33. 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

34. 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

35. 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.
36. 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.
37. One externally provided course has been delivered at no cost this year through Tenant Central called 'Managing a Project'.

Equality and Diversity Implications

38. The equality impact assessment was reviewed and updated for the 2014/15 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.
39. Appendix 3 shows profile information collected for the first six months of the programme and shows that there continue to be more women than men accessing our training with 35.90% being disabled. The majority of attendees are white British (64.11%), though this is a decrease from the same point last year at 74.08%, indicating that more BME customers are accessing our training.
40. The age group 60-74 (46.15%) continues to be the most common of our attendees, followed by 25-39 (23.08%).

Environmental implications

41. The programme offers a course relating to environmental awareness, aiming to reduce fuel poverty called 'Saving energy and money'.
42. Delivering Energy Best Deal sessions help customers understand how to reduce their fuel consumption and bills, as well as raising awareness of how to minimise the effects on damaging the environment by managing fuel consumption in their home better.

Health implications

43. 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.
44. Specifically we have delivered a 'Let's get digital, digital' drop in session, to help people learn how to access online services and increase the amount of information available to them. This increases the opportunity to access a wider range of services at lower prices and potentially reduce the impact on their finances and reduce stress.
45. Two courses, 'Confidence building' and 'Managing your stress', are due to take place before Christmas, as this can be a particular time of increased anxiety for some people due to financial strains, thus these courses aiming to minimise this risk.

Value for Money Implications

46. 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.
47. 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.

Consultation carried out

48. Customers were involved in consultation to develop the 2014/15 programme around the content, design and the selection of the trainer for capacity building courses.
49. 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 2014/15 programme.

Recommendations

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

Table 1: Comparison figures for the first half of the programme for 2014/15 and 2013/14

	2014/15		2013/14	
	Scheduled Courses	Demand led courses	Scheduled courses	Demand led courses
Number of courses held	3	3	3	5
Total of Attendees	24	22	33	51
External funding received	n/a	£380	n/a	£145.30*

*Issued in December 2013 along with amount for the academic term (September-December 2013). The company receives a maximum contract value of £624 therefore we were issued the difference of £145.30 following the amount already received in 2012/13.

Table 2: Courses held and attendees for Moving Forward programme 2014/15 and 2013/14

2014/15		2013/14	
Course Title	Attendees	Course Title	Attendees
Plumbing	8	Meeting skills and being Chair	14
Meeting skills and being Chair	9	Spot the scam	17
Decorating	10	Gardening	12
Managing a project	7	How to manage your money	8
Let's get digital, digital	6	Plumbing	9
Basic DIY	6	Drug and alcohol awareness	5
		Basic DIY	12
		Managing your stress (full day)	7
Total	46	Total	84

Appendix 2: Profile of attendees 1 April to 30 September 2014

Gender		
Male	9	23.08%
Female	30	76.92%
Total	39	100%
Disability		
Disabled	14	35.90%
Non disabled	25	64.10%
Total	39	100%
Ethnic origin		
Asian Indian	1	2.56%
Asian Pakistan	1	2.56%
Black African	5	12.82%
Mixed Other	1	2.56%
White British	25	64.11%
White Irish	1	2.56%
White Other	3	7.70%
Unknown/blank	2	5.13%
Total	39	100%
Age		
Under 25	2	5.13%
25-39	9	23.08%
40-49	3	7.69%
50-59	5	12.82%
60-74	18	46.15%
75 and over	0	0
Unknown/blank	2	5.13%
Total	39	100%

Appendix 3: Responses to questions for those who answered ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied for courses during the period 1 April – 30 September 2014

	Question	Satisfaction Response – ‘Very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied	
1	How satisfied are you with the course organisation?	100%	
2	How satisfied are you with the facilities?	97.44%	
3	How satisfied are you with the length of the course?	97.44%	
4	How satisfied are you with the trainer?	94.87%	
5	How satisfied are you with the course content?	94.87%	
		Yes	No
6	Did you find anything in the course racist, sexist or offensive in any way?	-	97.43%
7	From the skills and knowledge you’ve gained in this course could you apply them in your day to day life?	87.18%	10.26%
8	Did the course meet your expectations?	84.62%	12.82%
9	How satisfied are you with the opportunities to get involved today?	84.62%	
10	Overall, how satisfied are you with the course today?	89.74%	

Customer comments from courses:

- ‘Very good course, I have learnt a lot today’, (Plumbing)
- ‘Very helpful, informative and professional’, (Meeting skills and being Chair)
- ‘I think the course was very good, don’t think it could have been improved’, (Decorating)
- ‘I found the course excellent’, (Managing a project)
- ‘I learnt to read and understand and to take time to understand tablet and computer, I was there 3 hours’, (Let’s get digital, digital)
- ‘I now know that I will be able to put up a shelf and not confused about drill bits and plugs anymore’ (Basic DIY).

Appendix 4: Let's get digital, digital evaluation

	Attendee 1	Attendee 2	Attendee 3
How satisfied were you with the drop in?	Very satisfied	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied
What were you expecting to learn from the session?	To learn to turn on and off table and computer and not be afraid of them	Help with blocking Facebook pests	To learn how to contact the council
Did the session meet your expectations?	Yes very much so	Yes	Yes
What did you learn from the session?	I learnt to read and understand and to take time to understand table & computer, I was there 3 hours	How to block Facebook pests	
What will you do as a result of the session?	I am attending Whickham library to keep up my knowledge	Block Facebook pests	Try to use online services
Will you attend future sessions if they are available?	Yes	Maybe	Yes
Would you recommend it to friends/family?	Yes	Yes	Yes
What else would you like to see included in the session?	I can't think of anything more	Instruction on email settings	How to use computer with more advice
Was there anything you didn't get a chance to do during the session that you had hoped for?	No. The two people there (Helen & Simon) were exceeding helpful and pleasant	Couldn't access Google to demonstrate a problem!	
How satisfied were you with the venue of the session and facilities available?	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Fairly satisfied
Can you suggest any community venues in your area where you could hold future sessions?	Community hall, Whickham. Rectory Hall, Whickham. Whickham library.	Deckham community centre	
Any further comments to add		Better access to Google to help resolve problems!	