

Case Study: Northwards Housing - ALMO

Background

Northwards Housing is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) which was established in December 2005, to manage approximately 12,500 homes on behalf of Manchester City Council.

Enterprise was appointed by Northwards in January 2007, to undertake a root and branch analysis of the voids management process. This analysis included:

- A detailed review of existing practices
- An assessment of performance measurement
- The status of partnership arrangements

Initial Situation

Following an Audit Commission inspection in 2006, Northwards was judged as a good, two star organisation with excellent prospects for improvement. However, one area that was highlighted as needing significant improvement was that of re-letting empty properties. Therefore the Enterprise team was approached to conduct an analysis and make improvements to this area.

The focus for Northwards Housing, following the Audit Commission's report, was the management of the void properties.

The current situation had also been highlighted through existing poor performance levels in the related Best Value Performance Indicators. In 2006, the average number of days to re-let a property was between 70-75 days, compared with 28 days for top quartile ALMOs. Rent loss also underperformed at around 3% of total rent roll, compared with 1.21% for the top quartile.

Key Customer Requirement

The key deliverables from the project was to identify inefficiencies in the current process and present a prioritised list of recommendations for future improvements.

The project was extensive and involved all stakeholders, including tenant representatives, staff at all levels of Northwards Housing, the City Council and the repairs and maintenance Joint Venture partner, Manchester Working.

Our Response

The Enterprise team commenced the Voids Review in March 2006. The project was scheduled to be completed within an intensive five week period.

The approach involved the collection of qualitative data through a series of workshops, interviews, attendance at meetings, extensive process mapping and analysis of quantitative data.

The review also involved benchmarking activities, where comparisons of other housing organisations were made to find any common solutions to problems.

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The Northwards sponsor was updated on the progress of any major findings and worked actively with the team to ensure the necessary resources were available.

At the end of the Review, Enterprise presented the findings to the Northwards Executive Board and recommended future routes.

The final report included both 'As Is' and 'To Be' process maps, detailed

recommendations with an impact/resource analysis, and an outline Project Plan for implementation of the improvement project.

The review highlighted a number of relationship and managerial issues that were indirectly causing an adverse effect on voids performance. Enterprise addressed these in the recommendations.

Achievements

The collaboration with Northwards Housing proved effective, as they accepted all the recommendations made by Enterprise.

Northwards Housing has begun implementing the improvements which involve a number of radical changes to achieve improved performance.

Summary

Enterprise worked closely with all stakeholders to ensure that all requirements were understood and incorporated. The honest and transparent nature of the recommendations meant that Northwards Housing had a practical, tailored response that it could put into practice.

Enterprise will continue to support Northwards Housing whilst it implements the changes, and will proudly work on any further projects involving this housing organisation.



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