

BME Focus Group Minutes

Held at Southgate House on 17th March 2009

Background

Anita explained that the reason for holding the focus group was to identify areas where Gloucester City Homes could improve its service provided to tenants from black, ethnic and minority backgrounds. This will help GCH to provide an “excellent” service.

Discussion feedback

The discussion revolved around three key areas:

1. Communication

The group was asked their opinion of how GCH currently communicates with tenants. Positive feedback included:

- We answer the telephones consistently.
- The right people can always be got hold of.
- We are always polite and helpful.
- Our letters are clear and easy to understand.
- If transferred on the telephone, an appropriate person is able to help.
- Things have generally improved since GCH took over from the Council.

The group were then asked for areas in which GCH could improve. Ideas include:

- Develop a BME engagement framework to encourage more active participation.
- Ensure our employees reflect our customer base in terms of ethnicity.
- Ensure a clear equalities and community cohesion message is propagated through all media available.
- Utilise sports and youth centres to encourage more interest from young people.

2. Opening hours and access to services

Positive feedback included:

- One attendee who had used the out-of-hours anti-social behaviour line was very happy with the outcome.
- All attendees agreed that the GCH office is easily accessible, centrally located and welcoming.

Ideas for improvement include:

- Advertise availability of Saturday morning repairs appointments more.

- Advise customers who their local housing officers are.
- GCH should ensure staff cover is sufficient during the busiest times of the day to answer the telephones.

The group were asked for their opinion on whether GCH office opening hours should be extended. The responses are:

- >5.00pm: 2/3 attendees
- <9.00am: 1/3 attendees
- Weekends: 1/3 attendees

3. Neighbourhood improvement

The group was asked for ideas on how community cohesion could be promoted. Feedback included:

- People from different backgrounds already get on well together in Podsmead and Matson.
- We need to encourage the community to work towards common goals in order to bring people together.
- Community cohesion is affected by the Council's allocation policy. More consideration should be given to the allocation of properties where there are elderly or vulnerable people e.g. placing a young person in a flat above an elderly person may cause stress for the latter from noise etc.

End of meeting

Philip Amos
Resident Involvement Officer
18/03/2009