

ReAction Report For BME Focus Group 18/03/2010

At this focus group meeting, we asked our customers to suggest ideas on how we can improve our service provided to tenants from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. Our response to the issues raised and the action we plan to take follows.

You Said:	Our Reply:
<p>1. Communication</p> <p>Develop a BME engagement framework to encourage more active participation.</p> <p>Ensure our employees reflect our customer base in terms of ethnicity.</p> <p>Ensure a clear equalities and community cohesion message is propagated through all media available.</p> <p>Utilise sports and youth centres to encourage more interest from young people.</p>	<p>We have undertaken a survey of our BME customers to ascertain preferences for engagement and we have established a range of opportunities to engage including learning and development taster sessions.</p> <p>We have extended our advertising to more BME targeted media eg; through the use of Gloucester FM. Equality Britain etc. We have provided first line management training for staff from groups under represented at management level within GCH. We monitor our workforce profile and recruitment stats on an ongoing basis and report regularly to the Board.</p> <p>We publish our equalities and Community Cohesion stance and commitment through local media, via customer friendly leaflets and publications and through our promotion and attendance at diversity celebration events such as the World together festival in Gloucester park and Black history events.</p> <p>With partner organisations such as Gloucester Works we have run careers events at the Leisure Centre and Gloucester Rugby Ground. We have also run a youth day in Tredworth where a range of activities were provided including a climbing wall, Djing sessions etc. Starting in April we are also working with adult education and world jungle, running taster sessions in life coaching, football coaching, drama etc for BME residents.</p>

<p>2. Opening hours and access to services</p> <p>Advertise availability of Saturday morning repairs appointments more.</p> <p>Advise customers who their local housing officers are.</p> <p>GCH should ensure staff cover is sufficient during the busiest times of the day to answer the telephones.</p> <p>Office opening hours extension preferences:</p> <p>>5.00pm: 2/3 attendees</p> <p><9.00am: 1/3 attendees</p> <p>Weekends: 1/3 attendees</p>	<p>Following a customer survey we have extended our office hours from 8.30 to 5.30 Monday to Friday. This has been running for 12 months and our repairs partners now offer more flexible appointment times in the evenings and on Saturday morning, at request.</p> <p>Contact Information and pictures of housing officers are now provided to customers. Regular features about individual teams are included in tenant times.</p> <p>Telephone response times are under constant review and performance is good in this area.</p>
<p>3. Neighbourhood improvement</p> <p>We need to encourage the community to work towards common goals in order to bring people together.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>We have developed a robust community Cohesion strategy with a range of targets and actions. We hold regular fun days, action days and face the people events across all our communities. We are currently looking to develop a community mentoring scheme to further support this.</p> <p>This has been raised with the City Council and we are reviewing the impact of the introduction of the Choice Base Letting process.</p>

If you have any further questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact us:

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