

IN CONFIDENCE

RECOGNISING
EXCELLENCE
Raising Performance

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REVIEW REPORT

For

GLOUCESTER CITY HOMES

ASSESSOR: CHRISTINA SIMMONDS

DATE: 1st MARCH 2010



Investors in People South West is delivered by Recognising Excellence Ltd, Unit 20 Highnam Business Centre, Two Mile Lane, Highnam, Gloucester GL2 8DN Tel: 01452 413641 Email: info@recognisingexcellence.co.uk www.recognisingexcellence.co.uk

Registered in England number: 06506091

CONTENTS

1. Background and Review Process
2. Outcomes of Review
3. Continuous Improvement Activity

Appendices

Review Framework - Summary of Findings

Evidence Summary

1. BACKGROUND AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Gloucester City Homes (GCH) manages and provides housing services for 4,800 tenants and leaseholders in the City. It is a company wholly owned by the City Council and is non profit making. Since the Company was launched, as an Arms Length Management Organisation, in December 2005, they have steadily improved services, working with tenants by listening and delivering their priorities, identifying with them their service standards and taking into account their views every step of the way. This year GCH continued to strive for excellence, working with tenants and for tenants to meet their needs and objectives for their homes and communities.

Having successfully secured almost £40 million to invest in improving homes, following the achievement of a 2* Good service rating from the Audit Commission in 2007, GCH have made excellent progress towards meeting their Decent Homes Target by 2011. They continue to secure excellent outcomes in terms of quality delivery and high value from partnership with their decent home partners and achieved consistently high levels of tenant satisfaction with the improvements made, whilst always ensuring expenditure is line with budgets.

At the business-planning meeting in November 2008, the Board agreed that the key aim is to become an excellent 3* rated service. Tenants deserve excellence and action plans and objectives support this strategy by improving tenants' homes and the services that are provided. The business plan focuses on tenant priorities, which include providing a high quality repairs services and tackling community concerns like Anti-Social Behaviour.

The Company's strategy is to develop the organisation by creating opportunities to expand housing management services in the City. At the same time, it is the Boards' view that GCH should take a lead role on wider new build and redevelopment schemes for affordable housing and mixed communities. GCH received investment partner status with the Homes and Communities Agency in 2008 and have been exploring a range of options since. Equally, GCH are mindful of the Council's Options Review which was completed in December 2008 which clearly identifies a long term future for GCH by achieving 3* status and then plan for independence in consultation with tenants and leaseholders. The board believes that this would be the most advantageous solution to meet the long terms aspirations and needs of tenants living in the Council's housing stock.

The Board, Management and Teams look forward to continuing to achieve better outcomes for customers, improving homes and making communities better places to live. GCH is committed to providing first class housing services to all their customers.

The Review took place according to the plan agreed

2. OUTCOMES OF REVIEW

- Recognition as an Investor in People

Gloucester City Homes fully meets the requirements of the Investors in People Standard. I am pleased to confirm that there are no actions required to meet the Standard, following this successful Review Visit.

Recognition as an Investor in People is therefore maintained. Gold level has been awarded.

The Company is an exemplar of outstanding performance in particular of employee engagement. The values of the organisation are central to every activity particularly 'Pride' in delivering excellent service to residents, the community generally and each other.

Senior managers have thrown out the 'ration book' approach to celebration and recognition and daily find reasons to praise the contribution to success people are making. Every Chief Executive briefing starts with successes and congratulations.

The enthusiasm of staff is palpable. There is an air of excitement and anticipation across the organisation. Everyone has a part to play and is recognised for it. Teams have become innovation hotbeds for ideas to extend, improve services and improve performance.

Recognition at Gold level is an outstanding achievement by everyone who works for the Company. To have achieved success against 173 of the possible 196 Evidence Requirements (88%) is truly exceptional, a wonderful team effort.

- Feedback on the appropriate aspects of the Investors in People framework that relate to Gloucester City Homes business objectives and agreed review objectives as follows:

Value for money in relation to learning and development,
Talent management and the development of leadership capability and managers of the future,
People's perception of the effectiveness of communication, 'What works best for them'.

Plainly the progress achieved in the past four years is very much attributable to the whole shift in management skill and behaviour which has proved motivational in helping staff perform well; this clearly demonstrates value for money.

Initiatives have taken place to capitalise on courses run in partner organisations which both minimises costs and promotes networking to the benefit of the client group.

In addition, there is a great deal of cross-team sharing of knowledge and information, giving people a more rounded perspective and understanding of the whole company.

Interestingly the areas of the Standard showing least positively are around the planning of learning and development at team level and strategies to evaluate the impact management practice has on achieving business outcomes.

This area might particularly benefit from action to identify the specific activities which are particularly contributing to continuous improvement.

A great deal of work has been done to identify management competences and provide appropriate company wide and tailored solutions to meet individual's development needs. The style of management is involving and enabling with a degree of strategic thinking at every level now being built into management job roles.

Everyone is given the opportunity to develop leadership capability irrespective of their current role as part of the involvement and empowerment of people which has been taking place progressively, as line managers themselves become more capable and confident. This approach engenders enthusiasm, confidence and greater professionalism in everyone, at the same time freeing line managers to take on the more strategic aspects of their role.

Keeping talented and capable people energised is challenging when there are inevitably a limited number of management positions available. Therefore it is even more important to provide flexibility and stretch within work roles and through staff benefits to retain and motivate high performers, always recognising that some people will move on.

Alternative structures may be helpful in providing management and leadership opportunities with which to engage people without the simplistic hierarchical approach. This could be cost effective and open growth and development opportunities to more individuals than the traditional routes would allow.

Interviewees considered that communication was very effective. All believed it was a 'living' process with many ways of getting information and opportunities to input to decisions, raise issues and make suggestions. Ideas are encouraged and welcomed, rewarded where appropriate.

Of the many methods used individuals expressed preferences, but for everyone the direct briefings were most valued. Asked to rank their top two preferences, everyone rated the Chief Executive's briefing or team meetings as number one, mainly because they are interactive, partly because they are fun. Second preferences were more varied and included staff newsletter, e-mails and one-to-one meetings.

- Summary of strengths identified

Core values are at the heart of the Company. Staff and other stakeholders were consulted with to define and agree them and the aims of the organisation. At every opportunity these values are reinforced and reflected upon. "It's the way we are here" was said often.

People are encouraged to be involved in everything that is happening. Communication is judged to be very good between teams, levels and each other.

Social responsibility is part of everyone's role but in addition the firm offers the opportunity through a number of schemes, including for the workless, for people to gain skills which will equip them for future careers.

Learning and development is continuous. At senior and management levels there is a great deal of forward thinking, recognising challenges and potential opportunities. All staff are engaged in learning and development, for which they take responsibility to

improve performance and equip themselves to take on additional/wider ranging duties as client expectations rise.

Diversity is embraced and valued; people from different backgrounds are encouraged to apply for job vacancies which are advertised in specialist areas to attract a wide range of applicants with the objective of the workforce reflecting the make up of the community.

There are lifestyle friendly policies and flexible working arrangements. The organisation is also DDA compliant. Although not directly involved in recruitment, informally staff are encouraged to work with people during their probationary period and give feedback.

Many people within the Company have developed their careers by being promoted through the ranks from temporary or junior positions into full-time and managerial posts. There is a strong belief in giving everyone the chance to maximise their potential.

The Company is very keen to develop leadership skills in all staff and everyone is involved in 'taking the lead' in some aspect of their work. Over time people have become more self managing/self-motivating because of the continuous encouragement through praise and development to think outside the box. People simply bubble with enthusiasm for what they are doing.

Management development is linked to required competences which all staff have been involved in defining and specific courses, coaching and mentoring is available together with external qualifications to ensure managers have the opportunity to gain the required skills. Performance is reviewed quarterly.

The competences were defined in conjunction with external bodies, Housing Quality Network, Hay and all linked to achieving business objectives within the spirit of the corporate core values.

From the top, managers try to 'live' the core values, they are very open, are seen as part of the team, getting involved in all aspects of the work and encouraging others to do so.

Knowledge sharing is encouraged and structures in place to enable/ensure that it happens, cross-team project groups also 'Blitz Days' and 'Pride Days' when everyone from across all the teams work together to achieve specific outcomes.

Through the regular appraisals and one-to-ones everyone is encouraged to participate in learning and development and supported in doing so. A formal coaching programme has been introduced.

Top managers are viewed as inspirational and everyone expressed confidence in the way the Company is being led, "wonderful" is a word used.

The reward and recognition strategy is developed with the formal involvement of the Employee Forum and other less formal input. People are asked to vote on preferred options.

Currently an incentive framework is being introduced to specifically reward those performing at the higher levels. Many individuals felt that this was very motivating because it affected pay. Other benefits were nice to have but were not viewed as particularly motivational. The work itself, the way people are encouraged to use their own initiative and their colleagues were what people cited as making it a great place to work.

People are empowered through their learning and development and the style of their managers who actively encourage people to get involved, try out new approaches and ideas, to the point where daily people are making suggestions to improve performance. Pride is one of the core values and it informs everything in the Company. Individuals are enthused by the work they do, are proud of their managers and managers in turn so proud of the staff.

People have the opportunity to learn in many ways including formal courses, workshops, shadowing and e-learning, mentoring and coaching is also available. Much learning takes place on the job through people sharing knowledge and participating in team problem-solving. Achievements are recognised and celebrated daily. Every Chief Executive briefing starts with congratulations. Annually teams identify and present to colleagues their top 10 achievements. Everyone is encouraged to acknowledge the success of others.

Rewards include public praise, bursaries and champagne; when the company achieved two stars following the last Audit Commission inspection everyone had two days holiday and went on the London Eye.

Learning and development is very much part of the fabric and it is taken for granted that it is a means to performance improvement.

The performance of the organisation has been transformed in the past few years, Management practices and learning and development have enthused and inspired people. Business results show:

- Achievement of 2 stars (from none) in 18 months which unlocked £40 million to put into the Decent Homes programme,
- Decent Homes programme on target for 100% completion by 2011,
- Customer Service Excellence Award,
- 97% of enquiries are sorted at the first point of contact,
- Customer satisfaction across the company over 90%, many teams have achieved 100% scores,
- Working with tenants has increased the take-up of welfare benefits and has resulted in an extra £300K for tenants,
- Rent arrears have been reduced year on year,
- Absenteeism rates fallen from an average of 14 days to 6.

The Company participates in The Times 100 survey and has been identified as 'one to watch'. Executive managers and Trustees recognise the quality and quantity of ideas put forward the 'ambition' and pride people take in their work. People are convinced that they have more skills, qualifications and confidence to move forward in their careers. They also believe that the teams are stronger; much more customer focused and have developed strong links with other agencies to deliver sustainable communities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback in a variety of formal and informal ways including the Employee Forum, staff surveys and one-to-one conversations.

Management development has been improved and coaching introduced together with structural changes to improve reporting lines. The performance management framework has been introduced, the appraisal system revised and an external job evaluation exercise carried out.

The staff survey shows that people's view of how they are managed has improved.

Comments included:

"There is a huge difference in the past year, much better structure."

"I look forward to coming in each day; I think every person wants to go above and beyond."

"It's a very innovative Company."

Without question interviewees thought Gloucester City Homes was a great place to work.

- Summary of development areas identified

There is a thorough and continuous review of activities and their contribution to improved performance. It may now be timely to review the strategies which underpin the activities and identify/quantify the impact each has on achieving business outcomes.

Individuals are very involved in identifying their own learning and development needs but at team level there appears to be a much more ad hoc approach both in identifying team needs, the evaluation criteria and evaluation of outcomes in terms of team performance. Learning and development is very motivational and involvement in the whole process will enable everyone to identify priorities for the use of the learning and development budget, the desired outcomes in terms of improved performance (providing evidence of value for money), and identify the benefits to performance after the event.

The benefits package available to staff has become much more a 'hygiene' factor than a motivator. Working with representatives, identify specific relevance placed by the staff on the different items in the current package to extract the 'Top 5'. Resources can then be reapplied to those areas which really are recognised as motivators.

- Awareness of Train to Gain / Skills for Life / Skills Pledge

The organisation is fully aware of the services provided through Train to Gain

- Feedback on opportunities for further improvement and continuous development

In preparation for future reviews Gloucester City Homes will now be looking at the outstanding evidence requirements not yet met. It is suggested that the remaining Evidence requirements relating to Indicators 2 and 9 may be worthwhile for further consideration because these will particularly help in your quest to demonstrate value for money.

www.investorsinpeople.co.uk provides guidance on continuing to work with Investors in People and will help to keep you updated on any changes and developments.

You may also wish to visit Investors in People South West's website at www.recognisingexcellence.co.uk for useful information on products, services and events, and the latest local Investors in People news and updates.

Examples of services offered include:

- Celebrating your success at the next Investors in People Networking Club where you will be provided with publicity, photographs and information on PR and press releases. The club also provides the opportunity to meet other organisations in your area to share experiences and ideas and improve your business knowledge. So feel free to attend as many as you like.
- If you would like further advice tailored to your own particular circumstances and needs to assist you in line with the findings of this report, Investors in People South West's Advisory Service will be more than happy to assist.
- Consider attending one of our workshops or asking one of our trainers to design bespoke in house development for you.

Alternatively you can phone Investors in People South West on 01452 413641 to find out more about any of these areas.

3. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY

A key part of your Investors in People review is the continuous improvement activity which will take place in the form of a separate feedback and action planning meeting a short time after your review. This will help you to focus on where your organisation can develop further and provide you with ideas and support to help move forward.

We have arranged this meeting for: 12/03/10 at 10.00 am with the Chairman, Chief Executive and Executive Manager Organisational Development & Diversity. The specific objectives have been agreed as: to discuss the outcomes of the review and focus on the way forward.

As part of the package of support, I will arrange a contact with you annually for the next two years to review progress and changes within your organisation, provide you with information on developments within Investors in People and other Standards and help to identify options to support your ongoing development using the Investors in People framework. In Year Three there will be a further review using the Investors in People framework, during which it will be confirmed whether your organisation continues to meet the Standard and so maintain your recognition as an Investor in People. This review will also focus on relevant elements of the Investors in People framework jointly identified as supporting your organisations continuous development.

OPTIONAL FORMAT FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT / ACTION PLAN

The first column of this Plan has been completed for you as a basis for moving your organisation forward.

Area for Further Development	Action agreed	Responsibility	Date
<p>List the key HR/people management strategies. Relate each to the 3 main business outcomes i.e. performance/customer satisfaction/value for money. Devise a methodology for measuring the impact each has on outcomes. Pilot. Revise. Implement any changes.</p>			
<p>Using existing team meetings identify and plan team learning and development. Define how the impact will be measured. Identify the contribution to team success made by learning and development.</p>			
<p>Involve teams/representative groups in ranking individual benefits in order of importance to them. Identify which 3 are seen as most essential and the 3 least essential. Consult on any proposed changes/re-distribution of resources. Pilot/ Revise/Keep under review.</p>			

Date for your next Investors in People assessor visit: January 2011

APPENDIX A REVIEW FRAMEWORK / SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

KEY:

GOOD PRACTICE IS CLEARLY ESTABLISHED
GOOD PRACTICE IS DEVELOPING
GOOD PRACTICE HAS NOT YET COMMENCED
NOT CONSIDERED AT THIS VISIT / EVIDENCE NOT APPLICABLE TO THIS GROUP

THE INVESTORS IN PEOPLE FRAMEWORK: A SUMMARY OF ITS CONTENTS

PLAN				DO				REVIEW	
01: BUSINESS STRATEGY	02: LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT	03: PEOPLE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	04: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	05: MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS	06: RECOGNITION & REWARD	07: INVOLVEMENT & EMPOWERMENT	08: LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT	09: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	10: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

THE STANDARD TOP MANAGERS SHOULD MAKE SURE (AND THEIR PEOPLE SHOULD CONFIRM) THAT:

The organisation has a vision/purpose, strategy and plan People are involved in planning Representative groups (where appropriate) are consulted when developing the plan	Learning priorities are clear & linked to the plan Resources for learning & development are made available The impact will be evaluated	People are encouraged to contribute ideas There is equality of opportunity for development & support	Managers are clear about the capabilities they need to lead, manage & develop people People know what effective managers should be doing	Managers are effective & can describe how they lead, manage & develop their people	People believe they make a difference People believe their contribution is valued	Ownership & responsibility are encouraged People are involved in decision-making	People's learning & development needs are met	Investment in learning can be quantified Impact can be demonstrated	Evaluation results in improvements to people strategies & management
---	---	---	---	--	--	---	---	--	--

YOUR CHOICE TOP MANAGERS SHOULD MAKE SURE (AND THEIR PEOPLE SHOULD CONFIRM) THAT:

<p>Clear core values relate to vision & strategy</p> <p>Key performance indicators are used to improve performance</p> <p>Social responsibility is taken into account in the strategy</p> <p>People & stakeholders are involved in strategy development</p>	<p>The learning & development strategy builds capability</p> <p>Plans take account of learning styles</p> <p>People help make decisions about their own learning</p> <p>Learning & development is innovative & flexible</p> <p>There is a culture of continuous learning</p>	<p>The recruitment process is fair, efficient & effective</p> <p>A diverse, talented workforce is created</p> <p>A work-life balance strategy meets the needs of its people</p> <p>Constructive feedback is valued</p> <p>The structure makes the most of people's talents</p>	<p>Leadership & management capabilities for now & the future are defined</p> <p>Managers are helped to acquire these capabilities</p> <p>Leadership & management strategy link to business strategy, taking account of external good practice</p> <p>Everyone is encouraged to develop leadership capabilities</p>	<p>Managers are role models of leadership, teamwork & knowledge sharing</p> <p>Coaching is part of the culture</p> <p>People are helped to develop their careers</p> <p>There is a culture of openness and trust</p>	<p>Reward & recognition strategies link to business strategy & are externally benchmarked</p> <p>Representative groups are consulted (where appropriate)</p> <p>What motivates people is understood</p> <p>Success is celebrated</p> <p>Benefits strategy goes beyond legal requirements</p> <p>Colleagues' achievements are recognised</p>	<p>Effective consultation & involvement is part of the culture</p> <p>People are supported & trusted to make decisions</p> <p>Knowledge & information are shared</p> <p>People are committed to success</p> <p>There is a culture of continuous improvement</p> <p>People can challenge the way things work</p> <p>There is a sense of ownership & pride in working for the organisation</p>	<p>Learning & development resources are used effectively</p> <p>Learning is an everyday activity</p> <p>Innovative & flexible approaches to learning & development are used</p> <p>People are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential</p> <p>All learning is valued & celebrated & is an everyday activity</p> <p>Mentoring is used</p> <p>Personal development is supported</p>	<p>The contribution of people strategies is measured & evaluated</p> <p>Impact on key performance indicators can be described</p> <p>Performance improves as a result</p> <p>Career prospects improve</p> <p>Flexible & effective approaches to measuring return on investment are used</p> <p>Return on investment in people is reported to stakeholders</p>	<p>Self review & information from external review are used</p> <p>Effective feedback methods are used to understand people's views on how they are managed</p> <p>Internal & external benchmarking are used</p> <p>People's views on how they are managed improves</p> <p>People believe it's a great place to work</p>
---	--	--	--	--	---	--	--	---	---

Evidence Summary

	CORE & YOUR CHOICE EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS MET																												Score		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29		
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	25
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	25
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	13
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	24
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	16
7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	16
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	18
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	15

Total 173