

Income Management Focus Group held on 15/02/07 at 5.30 pm at Gloucester City Homes

Customer Attendees

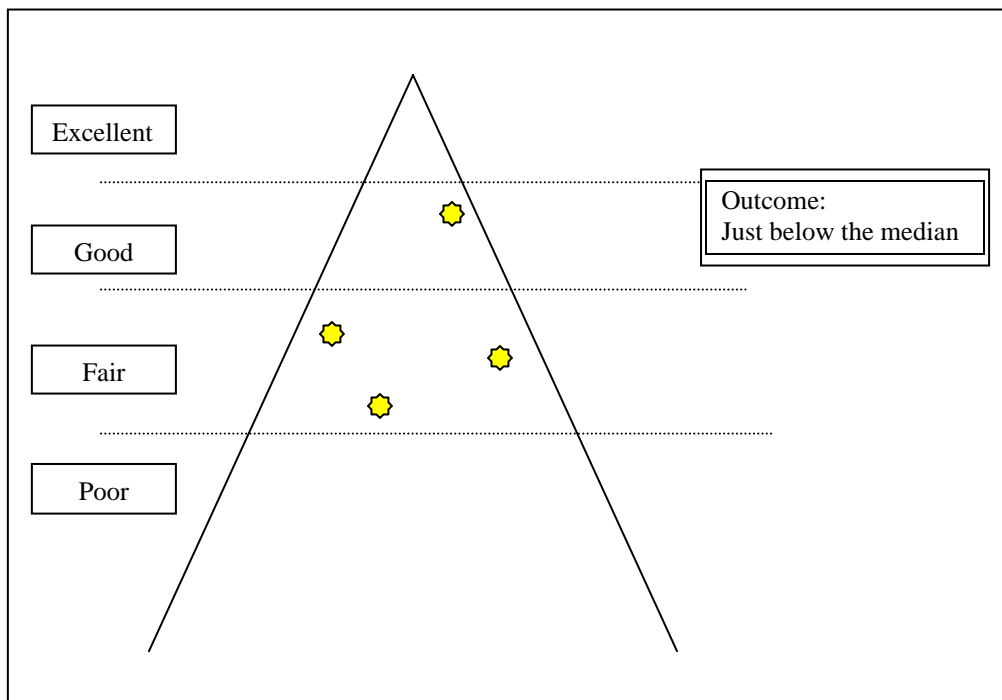
There were 4 attendees at this focus group 2 male 2 female. Their ages varied from older to middle and they came from Matson, Tredworth, Saintbridge and Westgate.

GCH Attendees

Name	Company Position	Telephone	Email
Sam Chambers	Income Management Manager	396544	Sam.chambers@gloscityhomes.co.uk
Pat Andrade	Neighbourhood Services Manager	396556	Pat.Andrade@gloscityhomes.co.uk
Terry Elcock	Resident Involvement Officer	396071	Terry.elcock@gloscityhomes.co.uk

Overall satisfaction

The group were asked to indicate on a mountain how well they thought GCH were currently performing.



The group were asked to name things we do well.

- Rent statements are now more clearer and easier to understand
- The print type and size is easier to read on statements
- Rent statements are more frequent.
- We are now starting to get better value the rent we pay

- Most tenants are aware of the citizen's advice bureaux and use it.
- City Council benefit staff are very helpful
- Rent statements are more up to date
- GCH staff are more efficient when dealing with rent enquiries

The group were asked to name things we do not do so well.

- GCH should not allow tenants to pay their rents in arrears
- Even though staff are efficient I think that maybe too efficient at times you now get a reminder if you miss one week rent
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General questions asked by the group

Question 1

Can GCH run a campaign to make people more aware that if they go on statutory sick pay for more than a week from work that they are entitled to Housing Benefit if they are on a low income?

Answer

We will liaise with Gloucester City Council to make them aware that this has been brought to our attention and include this in publicity material and the tenant times.

Question 2

How many members of staff are dedicated or it is their sole job to work on collecting arrears?

Answer

Since GCH was established in Dec 2005 we introduced specialist teams to concentrate on specific areas of work and the income management team currently have 8 members of staff. It is also every GCH member's responsibility to ensure if they visit a customer that has rent arrears that this is addressed with them to try and find out how we can help them overcome the problem.

Question 3

How long is a tenant allowed to get into arrears with their rent, before any action is taken?

Answer

GCH has a target to contact the person by phone or letter within 1 week and GCH will refer customers to debt advice and area support workers

Question 4

Do people with rent arrears ever get help from charities?

Answer

GCH have explored this with various charitable organisations and they have all been reluctant to assist. Some employers have agreed to help their staff with rent problems and Gloucester City Council has an emergency fund to help prevent homelessness.

**Minute by Terry Elcock
Resident Involvement Officer
15/02/07**