



DLO Review

Redefining an in-house repairs service

Our commission

echelon was appointed to carry out a review of Trafford Housing Trust's (THT) in-house repairs service, focusing on its policies and offer to customers with a view to driving efficiency and growing the volume and value of revenue streams.

Client: Trafford Housing Trust

Trafford Housing Trust has a stock of 8,800 affordable homes in the Manchester borough of Trafford. In 2015/16 its in-house repairs service completed more than 33,000 repairs, generating £47 million of social value and investing £11.8 million. It also provides a chargeable 'Handyfix' service.

Project overview

echelon carried out a two-stage review process starting with analysis of the existing delivery model and a review of the team and the client/contractor function, the repairs policy and terms and conditions.

A series of benchmarking exercises and workshops were held with a focus on productivity and value.

Extensive one-to-one phone interviews were conducted with tenants who hadn't accessed the services for a year or had complained within the previous 12 months, as well as those who had had work carried out within the previous three months.

Workshops were also held with stakeholders and operatives and echelon conducted one-to-one interviews with the executive team.

Residents identified 51 areas for consideration while the consultation with stakeholders and operatives highlighted 42 operational and 30 internal objectives.

The service was found to be reliable and trustworthy and delivered high-quality work with a focus on customers. Other strengths included knowledge in the workforce, flexibility in appointments and online repair reporting options.



But weaknesses were identified in IT, communications, the performance of the materials supplier, performance in first-time fix and follow ons, the lack of a freephone number, no weekend/evening appointments and appointment timeslots that were too long. The review also highlighted that 1% of properties were responsible for generating 8% of repairs.

The second stage was an options appraisal, which considered a range of delivery models including outsourcing, franchising, a joint venture company, shared services with another provider, partnerships with other repairs services, a self-employed model and a 100% subcontracted project management service, as well as the option of retaining a Direct Labour Organisation.

Three options were considered in detail – an outsourced model, retaining the in-house repairs service and creating a wholly owned subsidiary (WOS) – and for each echelon undertook impact and cost benefit analysis and looked at procurement costs/savings, ongoing costs and pros/cons of the model.

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The solution

The outcome was to retain the DLO, which aside from some small and easily fixable issues, was delivering a good service with good benchmark costs.

But 21 recommendations were made for future delivery, including redrafting the repairs policy, amending KPIs, introducing an area-based delivery model, adopting a multi-skilled approach, developing a commercial model and incentivised delivery model, reclassifying repairs priorities, redefining appointment times and extending operating hours, as well as defining the social value offer.



Key outcomes

Reports were generated at each stage of the process and fed into echelon's final report, which was approved by the board.

A detailed implementation plan was developed to redefine the service and project teams were set up in four key areas – ICT development, HR changes, process re-engineering and materials provision – with an interim project manager appointed to lead.



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