Working Together

Rethinking Voids
Halton covers the two main towns of Widnes and Runcorn – either side of the Mersey

17 social landlords – we are the largest

Halton borough characterised by:
- Industrial legacy
- Densely populated 9 miles end to end
- Low numbers of BME residents
- Ageing population
- Significantly lower than average earnings
- Significantly higher than average unemployment and worklessness
- Higher than average levels of deprivation and crime
- Life expectancy much lower than average
Potted history

- LSVT December 2005
- Stock of 6500 (176 acquired from Cosmopolitan)
- Growing the stock in the borough through acquisitions, mortgage rescue and new build
- Open Solutions – commercial subsidiary private rented
- Employees around 260 with approx 115 in Construction Services
- Strong corporate commitment to growing Construction Services
- In-house repairs, voids, adaptations and now almost all investment
- External contractor for gas servicing and maintenance
- Construction Services Income:
  - Investment delivery = £8m
  - D2D = £1.639m
  - Voids = £1.134m
  - Adaptations = £0.45m
Rethinking Voids  (Our Story)

This is the story of What, Why and How Halton Housing Trust has made some dramatic changes and savings on the voids process.

We are not promoting this as the ideal model, what we are saying its working for us.

Hopefully you will be able to see some good practice and how working together across your organisations can have some major rewards.
The start of our Journey January 2012

Performance

➢ Poor and indifferent up to 42 days turnaround

➢ Costs high average void cost £1,550 per prop

➢ Void rent loss at £492 per prop

➢ Quality issues with high number of refusals

➢ High management time and blame culture
The start January 2012

Performance (continued)

- Work carried out by in-house team as and when resources available and then reliant on sub-contractors.

- Decoration Vouchers issued to every property at a cost of £50K per year.

- Complaints high from not only new customers following tenancy but also potential customers for waiting times and following viewings.
New start new beginning

What did we look at and need to consider?

Time

Cost

Quality
What did we consider?

- Void standard having a flexible approach
- Structure of team within Construction Services with the view of bringing all work within CS !!
- Working Together bringing a structured group across the three departments, Housing Management, Construction Services and Housing Options
- Impact CBL (PPP) due to be introduced in July 12
What did we consider?

- Introduction of new main frame QL system July 12
- Use of Customer Scrutiny panel.
- Review of our customer’s affected by UOC
- HHT New Direction strategy
- The void survey process
New void standard

Safe  Clear  Clean

Safe
To comply with all legislation

Clear
Clear all previous customers belongings

Clean
Free from infestation graffiti and clean
Decoration
We will not decorate or issue decoration vouchers unless your property is in Very Poor condition.

Minor repairs
To aid the customer moving in quickly it may be necessary to carry out some minor repairs after the customer has moved in.
PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS
We will let you know if there are any Major Works

Customer
Signs to accept the property.
And agrees to leave it in the same condition
Construction Services structure

- Split the R&M team to have a dedicated voids team.
  - Void Contract Manager
  - Void Technical Manager
  - Void assistant Technical Manager
  - Assistant Maintenance coordinator

- Dedicated fixed Maintenance Technicians
- Back up sub contractors (not required YTD)
Void summit

- Launch our new approach to voids
- Formed a new voids group with members of each team HM, CS, HO
- New clear structure for communication
- New clear process
Void summit

- New clear roles and responsibilities of individuals
- Set out our new targets
- Shadowing and tour of Void properties for all key staff
- Introduction of Leave it Clean campaign
- Introduction of Welcome Pack and Cleaning Pack
Resources

- Decision to bring work in house where we can demonstrate VFM
- Dedicated fixed resource of Maintenance Technicians
- With flexibility to move across remits at times of peaks and troughs
- Increase imprest van stocks to reflect remit requirements
Scrubtini Panel Inspection

- Second review under taken following the response repairs review for CS

- In-depth over three months

- 19 point action plan for improvements of which 18 accepted and completed within six months

- Follow up visit and review by Scrutiny Team

- Regular audits of our voids by our Customer Inspectors
Introduction of CBL (PPP)

- Established Housing Options Team
- Management of Property Pool Plus Register for several RSL’s in Halton
- Go live date of July 2012
- Introduction of new IT system
- Small dip in performance at change over due to weekly advert cycle
- First development phase of our new homes came live
Introduction of CBL (PPP)

- Enforcement of 4 weeks notice
- Adverts and viewings under notice
- Use of Incentives for UOD and cleanliness
- New Gateway Officer and Mutual Exchange Officer
- Linking voids to New Aids & Adapts Policy – securing savings and maximising use of adaptations
Introduction of CBL (PPP)

- Reduced size of void group to key people only
- Each stage target driven with accountabilities
- Hard to Lets advertised as Available Now and on Open Rent
- Dec budget devolved to HO Advisers
- Achieved 78 Back to Back lets last year
Halton Housing Trusts New Direction

Two themes
- Making Choices
- Taking Responsibility

Four Principles
- Protect our current income
- Reduce our costs and drive efficiency
- Focus our resources and service
- Generate new income
The Technical Managers survey

- Fit key safe
- Security risk assessment
- Asbestos survey
- Stock condition survey
- Tree survey
- Services - take readings and equipment survey and contact nearest gas MT to respond to cap off
- Prepare repairs schedule
- List recyclable goods
- Prioritise schedule
What else have we done?

- Introduced two new void categories V1G and V5
- Changed our partnership for Dual Fuel to British Gas
- Review of our garden clearing arrangements with our Environmental Services merging with Construction service this work will now be in-house
### What have we achieved?

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2011 / 2012</th>
<th>2012 / 2013</th>
<th>2013 / 2014</th>
<th>2014 / YTD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turnaround</td>
<td>42 days</td>
<td>27 days</td>
<td>19.52 days</td>
<td>16.38 days</td>
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<td>Average void cost</td>
<td>£1550</td>
<td>£1360</td>
<td>£1006</td>
<td>£1024</td>
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<td>Rent loss</td>
<td>£492.50</td>
<td>£294.24</td>
<td>£202.14</td>
<td>£210.61</td>
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What have we achieved  Impact rent loss
What have been the benefits to us?

- Rent loss       Massive savings
- Repairs cost   Massive savings
- No refusals on property condition
- Reduction in security costs
- Reduction in void break-ins
- Staff feel empowered
- Inter-departmental (TRUST)
- Very few complaints in the void services
Added value?

- No Client – Contractor duplication (free) survey information Stock condition and Tree survey
- Recycling of white goods for our Vulnerable customers
- Donations of household goods to Halton Haven Hospice
- Dual fuel for customers with British Gas
- Partnership with Power in Partnership (PiPS)
Have we got the balance right?

Time

Cost

Quality
What's next?

- Priority to Keep the balance right?
- Carry out pilot this year on flexible working hours for Maintenance Technicians
- Formalise our current pilot of in-house cleaning team
- Train and bring in-house a pest control team
- Complete the merger of the Environmental Team
What's next?
Name: John Maddox
Tel: 0151 510 5084
Mob: 07903556249
Email: john.maddox@haltonhousing.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/halton-housing-trust
Twitter: .