

active response

turning problems into solutions

No 5 - Capturing the Lessons on
Supporting Tenants through
Targeted Recruitment and Training



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turning problems *into* solutions

Welcome to active response - a series of briefings from **i2i** – inform to involve.

active response 5 – Supporting Tenants through Targeted Recruitment and Training

Active Response 5 will reflect on the work that many social landlords are already involved in to **provide support to their tenants to benefit from targeted recruitment and training (TR&T) opportunities**. It will also include a range of good practice examples that can be replicated or tweaked to provide TR&T opportunities to tenants and communities that social housing providers serve.

However, as a result of the coalition government's fiscal and welfare policies, a number of significant changes are on the horizon which will mean that maximising rental income collection will become even more important, as will the role of social housing providers in improving economic activity which can lead to lower rent arrears, falling levels of crime, less forms of poverty and enhanced financial inclusion.

i2i believes that providing support to tenants who wish to enter or return to the labour market should be one of the support options that social housing providers offer to work towards reducing the impact of the welfare reform. This should be seen as a part of a suite of support packages that are put in place to support tenants who will be affected.

In the past TR&T has been driven by development and maintenance programmes which have already created 1183 sustainable training and job opportunities. In light of current and anticipated housing and welfare policy changes, supporting and signposting tenants into employment and training opportunities and providing support for them to get closer to the labour market is going to become even more fundamental.

Anticipating the changing welfare to work provision through the new DWP Work Programme, we need to see housing officers and neighbourhood services delivering much more than the traditional housing management service and supporting tenants into work if we want them to remain in their homes. TR&T needs to become generic across front – line housing staff, whether that is in terms of signposting or simply asking the right questions at the right time.

Equally, engaging young tenants and integrating them into TR&T is going to be crucial in order to attempt to future proof against forthcoming policy changes.

Changes such as the introduction of the universal credit, possible direct payments of housing benefit, and the potential of linking housing benefit payments to under-occupation are resulting in many social housing providers highlighting the need to focus on job and training support for tenants who may be affected by the welfare reform.

The key areas include:

1. Gathering information and tenant profiling
2. Tenant Engagement
3. Partnership working
4. Role of Housing Management
5. The Profession & Making the case
6. Our asks....

1. Gathering information and tenant profiling

1. Gathering information and tenant profiling

Due to the changes to the benefit system, now is a crucial time to ensure that tenants are being supported to benefit from targeted recruitment and training opportunities that housing providers are offering through using the Can Do Toolkit approach.

Tenant profiling has got to be much more than just understanding demographics – this exercise has to be asking questions around the training and employment ambitions of tenants, how they want to be kept informed of these opportunities

Also, front line staff who are building relationships with tenants need to have relationships with local training and employment agencies in order to signpost

To enable you as providers to understand tenants' employment and training ambitions, it is vital that tenant surveys and profiling exercises are seeking to find out this type of information. These processes need improved coordination – collecting information on jobs and training needs to go hand in hand with collecting information on financial inclusion.

For many retention authorities and stock transfers, the major improvement programme allows landlords an opportunity to 'piggy back' onto an existing engagement method in order to assess tenants' needs and desires.

For stock transfer organisations, visiting tenants' homes with new tenancy agreements again allows the opportunity to find out more about tenants' circumstances. Piggy backing on pre tenancy questionnaires, when clients call in to report any repairs or queries, general home visits can all be used to ask the vital questions needed for housing providers to be able to provide a be spoke service for their clients. However, the engagement of tenants in this aspect is extremely resource intensive and there are HR / DPA issues with keeping tenants information.

Good Practice

There needs to be a targeted approach towards TR&T and tenant profiling which can be achieved through piggy backing on things such as:

- Pre-tenancy questionnaires asking potential tenants on their home life amount of children etc as well jobs and training, and whether this would be of interest to them
- Pre-WHQS work questionnaires. Clients will be a more captive audience due to major improvements to their homes being carried out, and could be more willing to give personal information. Tai Ceredigion have used the above successfully in their profiling.
- Tenant census' have been used by Tai Calon to find out more about their tenants, which in turn will be able to identify support and potential work opportunities

Good Practice continued...

Other ways to inform tenants of the TR&T opportunities:

1. Flyer-drop all homes where improvements are going to be carried out, in order to inform tenants that there are training and job opportunities available, while work is being carried out on the estates and how they can get involved. Many tenants will not know that recruitment and training through their landlord is an option.
2. Website – advertisements and mini surveys on the home page
3. Social media
4. presence at community days
5. Career events
6. Speed dating style interviews
7. Directly linking up with community groups such as Communities First to provide a more locally focussed approach to engagement and communication

All information collated MUST be compiled into a database, which can profile on an estate basis in terms of unemployment, benefit recipients, disabilities, ages of household's dependants, in order to enable housing providers to provide bespoke services to target areas. The more you know about the tenants, the more effective the interventions and support can be, as well as the potential for stronger partnership working.

There is also the need for better IT systems that can be updated quickly, and analyse the information in order to provide the best possible service.

2. Tenant Engagement...it's wider than just construction

Tenant Engagement

Traditionally it has been hard to engage tenants and gather information about individuals. However, with the ability to piggy back on pre tenancy checks, WHQS surveys before work has been carried out, and during routine visits this information can be sourced. In order to engage tenants effectively in TR&T, social housing providers need to give some thought to:

1. Finding out how tenants use their landlord for wider services rather than just housing management, repairs and maintenance
2. Using a variety of ways to identify community priorities and needs
3. Widening the scope of traditional tenant participation e.g. to enable officers to signpost tenants to particular local agencies, deliver local community projects around TR&T
4. Engaging through schools, Youth Offending Team and NEETS is vital in order to ensure young people are engaged
5. Ensuring that the approach is cross-departmental and that housing management, property, inclusion and support are collectively working together

The use of social media and DigiTV has flourished in the last year, with the majority of tenants being able to access this information either at home on their own computers, on their mobile phones or through their televisions. Engaging clients through the internet i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Websites surveys as well as DigiTV are being increasingly used by social landlords with much success.

A proactive relationship with financial inclusion is also crucial to utilising the best outcomes for tenants and housing providers alike. Marrying up financial inclusion issues such as welfare advice, income maximisation and debt advice and then being able to offer support into employment, with targeted recruitment is vital. Bron Afon, for example has mechanisms that support this agenda with an in-house Money Mentor service. This is good practice that should be used more widely.

It's wider than just construction...

The Can Do Toolkits by i2i have been extremely successful in advocating the use of social clauses in contracts in order to create new job and training opportunities. This type of opportunity works very well with major investment programs such as WHQS and maintenance being carried out by local authorities, LSVTs and Housing Associations but organisations should be looking across the board at various opportunities to maximise TR&T opportunities through service contracts, consultants and loan providers. This could enable organisations to offer opportunities to tenants through cleaning, facilities management, telecommunications, IT and financial experience as well as caretaking, environmental and estate management services where tenants could get experience / training / job opportunity / volunteering opportunities.

3. Partnership Working

Partnership working

At a local authority level relevant departments such as housing benefit, homelessness and housing management, (if delivered by the local authority) should have a clear line of communication, and this should also be the case between other housing providers in the areas, training establishments and employment agencies. This will also ensure that the housing provider is aware of the different streams of welfare to employment schemes, the type of services they can offer, and whether or not a service is suitable for their communities. This joint working should be regularly supported by stakeholder meetings between all partners to update on developments or new mechanisms that will assist this agenda (see following Good Practice Boxes for more information).

If TR&T is in the contract, then the housing provider should ensure the contractor is holding open days / events on estates where major improvements are taking place. The housing provider can then be assured that there is a good marriage between the contractor and training agencies, allowing for local, estate based engagement to offer opportunities of employment or training.

Some community housing mutuals are using in-house Tenant Liaison Officers (TLOs) in order to profile tenants through engaging them during the WHQS investment programme. As previously stated, housing improvements give landlords a real opportunity to talk to tenants in a positive way, and may be the catalyst needed for a better relationship. In addition to assisting with the delivery of the improvement programme TLOs can go much further in terms of helping support tenants' wider well-being and quality of life. The TLO+ service covers a range of areas, such as identifying ways to maximise income through work, welfare benefits, reducing fuel poverty, increasing health and wellbeing, debt advice and addiction advice, for example by signposting to agencies that can help.

This approach, first pioneered by RCT Homes and tweaked and adopted by a number of other organisations is seen as a way forward, in not only increasing efficiencies in the WHQS process, but through enabling community regeneration and involvement to support community well-being rather than just tenancies.

3. Partnership Working

Making it work...Case Studies

PS Services is a new social enterprise delivering cleaning and grounds maintenance services and is a division of Gofal Enterprises Ltd – a mental health and wellbeing organisation supporting unemployed people.

PS Services aims to promote the mental wellbeing, confidence and self esteem of those it employs, actively recruiting from the communities it serves. It offers a range of opportunities including paid six month work experience, voluntary work opportunities, one to one support and mentoring, support in gaining access to permanent employment, and support in accessing training and education. This project is targeted at bringing tenants furthest removed from the job market back into work, and is a best practice example worth thinking about for all housing providers.

Gofal Cymru has acquired funding to run a project called The Aspire Project via Newydd Housing Association in the Vale of Glamorgan. Although the project was primarily for Newydd tenants, Newydd have kindly agreed for Gofal to open the project up to other housing association tenants. The aim of the project is to run the well-recognised Steps programme which helps people realise and fulfil their aspirations, set goals, improve confidence, motivation and self-esteem. The training programme also has OCN (now Agored Cymru) accreditation.

One of the aims of the project is to provide support for people to make a difference in their community. Whilst giving support and advice to those who want to achieve personal aspirations. This has given clients the skills and confidence needed to start looking into the job market, and gain employment.

Liverpool Housing Trust also offers work placements to residents living in their communities. Working in partnership with Liverpool's City Council's JET Service, residents are offered a paid 13 week transition employment programme. The programme includes gaining industry recognised qualifications such as health and safety certificates, and 10 weeks practical work experience. The criteria for inclusion in the scheme is very basic a) be unemployed and b) registered with JET

Family Mosaic (housing provider for London and Essex), has gone one step further and committed to 20% of their job vacancies are ring fenced and advertised only to tenants and service users. This ensures that clients, who may be unable to get a job elsewhere, have a good chance of full time employment, hence a guaranteed income rather than relying on benefits. With the changes to the benefits system this is an extremely positive step to ensuring the cash flow of rent is continuous. It also means that staff, who are also tenants themselves already understand the key issues, know what matters to the clients, and understand how important it is to ensure the organisation is a strong and viable company.

3. Partnership Working

Good Practice – the ways to engage with tenants

There is a need to engage tenants in a wider context through things such as

- show homes,
- social enterprise projects,
- community projects,
- fun days and youth based activities such as action camps
- school engagement and Youth Offending team

A proactive relationship with financial inclusion is also crucial to utilising the best outcomes for tenants and housing providers alike. Marrying up financial inclusion issues that a tenant has and then being able to offer support into employment, with targeted recruitment which will help them maximise their income is vital.

Tracking progress of any opportunities that are created is key to success. This will ensure that contractors are delivering what they are expected to, and that there is a corporate buy in to social inclusion. It has in the past been seen as an added extra, when in these economic times it needs to be at the forefront of the agenda to ensure any changes to housing benefits does not affect a housing providers income.

There is also the need to engage those who would not traditionally be engaged. Newport City Homes has run a number of extremely successful projects that have brought together young people via events such as Football projects, Hoodies to Goodies, and City Streets. These were all community based rather than tenants based, which helped include the wider area into the organisation's regeneration activity. A youth forum has been set up in partnership with a local charity (Urban Circle). This has allowed Newport City Homes to begin a dialogue process with younger generations, which has had the result of reducing anti-social behaviour on estates as well as being able to signpost tenants to TR&T, and other income maximisation opportunities.

4. Role of Housing Management

Role of Housing Management

The policy changes that will affect social housing tenancies have raised some questions about how we adapt housing management services to better support tenants sustain their tenancies. The changes that are being experienced are multi-faceted in nature which means we need more than just a traditional housing solution in order to address some of these concerns.

In today's climate, support to sustain a tenancy may include debt advice, job and training support, welfare advice and health and well-being service provision which raises questions around how do we refocus housing management services to become more community focused and enabling within local communities and neighbourhoods?

This point is just to highlight the fact that refreshing what we traditionally see as housing management will need to happen if we are to try and mitigate the potential impact of welfare reform. For the purpose of this briefing, the focus is on how TR&T delivery can play its part.

Throughout the allocation and tenancy management process, there could be an opportunity for housing officers to signpost tenants to TR&T opportunities through:

- waiting list / allocations
- pre tenancy work if Housing Officers are working on allocations. They have the opportunity to meet and talk to potential tenants during interviews and viewings that they can use to signpost people to TR&T opportunities if that is something that they would be interested in
- tenancy visits – again, this is when tenants feel most comfortable, they have been in their new homes for a few weeks and may want support with a number of issues, including support for ways into employment
- Use tenancy support to offer wider support – by liaising with tenancy support at an early stage in a person's tenancy, basic skills and confidence work can be carried out to get people work ready, at which point they can start to look for opportunities through the organisation
- Housing management officers have a wider range of partners that they work with to support their tenants to maintain tenancies. These partnerships can be used more widely to build confidence and capacity of people who are furthest away from the labour market

4. Role of Housing Management

Bron Afon is changing its housing management focus through developing a patch approach to service delivery, enabling a community housing officer to call on other services when needed, depending on the priorities and needs within that community. This started with community housing teams undertaking a community profile in order to tackle problems as well as offering solutions to a geographical community. This is not about adding extra responsibilities onto the role of a housing officer, but more so about changing our focus and providing a new ways of working to deal with new challenges that we face.

Social landlords have expressed concern due to a conflict of interest between tenancy enforcement, in particular rent arrears and supporting tenants back into work. Newport City Homes starts with a soft approach to find out why a tenant is having difficulties and how the landlord can help, usually through tenancy support, welfare advice and advocacy services. It is at these times when partnership working and communication within the organisation can have a real impact and shows how a patch approach can deliver improved outcomes for tenants.

Housing management officers need to use the support networks that they have with tenancy support, rent teams, ASB teams, housing benefit sections, and other partner agencies that may be working with tenants and welfare to work agencies to ensure that they do not take on more than they have capacity to do so. Again, partnership working is key to success, as well as sharing appropriate information between relevant parties. Therefore, early interventions can be identified.

5. The Profession & Making the Case

The Profession

There is a role for CIH to develop professional development and training opportunities to illustrate the wider role of housing management. Landlords need to be thinking about the widening and changing remit of Housing management and the Professional Body needs to be able to support them through this process through developing similar training opportunities for related services such as community investment, regeneration, financial inclusion and tenancy support.

The role of HR professionals is key to the success of TR&T as they are responsible for recruitment policies and procedures, which often do not reflect the changing role of housing management. There is a role here for CIH to also engage with HR on developing a route for tenants to benefit from TR&T opportunities.

Linked to this, it is widely recognised that organisations should be pushing the boundaries of recruitment policy and should be taking a lead on refocusing job descriptions and person specifications of housing management roles to take into account changing priorities and community needs. This needs to include behaviours and values to reflect any wider social corporate responsibilities that are being covered.

Making the case

How essential social inclusion and targeted recruitment and training is on the overall agenda of the organisation is of vital importance. It must be seen as a priority rather than an add on, especially in the current economic climate where the changes to welfare benefits can affect rental income.

In the light of the fact that a lot of support agencies are losing funding or being cut all together means that there needs to be a greater level of understanding from boards of management, Chief Executives and Directors the level of commitment that is needed if social housing providers are going to deliver sustainable TR&T opportunities to tenants and local communities. Not only do we recognise that social landlords are becoming more than simply a provider of affordable housing but delivering support and training to tenants as part of their corporate objectives will become more important over coming years. It is also important to measure the social return on investing in creating TR&T opportunities for tenants, in particular how engaging in this agenda could potentially negate the crippling effects of reduced rental income.

5. The Profession & Making the Case

How do we make the case?

We know that the housing sector is going to have to dig deep to find working solutions to the welfare cuts that are approaching. TR&T can be part of the suite of options that are suitable. But how do we get the sector to buy in?

A number of activities were identified:

- Using hard TR&T outcomes to demonstrate the financial savings and value that is achieved through mechanisms such as the Value Wales Community Measurement tool
- i2i and other cross sector organisations raising awareness of this approach with RSL Boards and senior officers to demonstrate the benefits and the importance of this agenda
- CIH using its professional development role to support the wider role of housing management to meet the demands of the changing housing landscape
- CIH and other organisations to support the HR function to explore the wider remit of housing management roles through recruitment and job evaluation processes, as well as using their expertise to support tenants through up skilling and recruitment master classes where appropriate
- Housing providers being organised in mapping out local support agencies
- Housing providers identifying wider opportunities through their general procurement activities in order to create job and training opportunities

6. Our Asks...

Our Asks...

i2i will:

- develop a pilot with a housing organisation to provide TR&T opportunities for tenants
- Identify DCELLS and additional current and future available funding options
- Assist organisations to create databases of all agencies, including funding resources that can be delivered through these agencies for local authorities and housing associations to turn to when setting up a project and ensuring it stays sustainable
- Champion Social procurement throughout organisations in order to strengthen the return on their buying power

Our ask of CIH Cymru is:

- To support the sector develop the role of housing management officers in order to be able to meet the organisation's social corporate responsibilities
- To support the sector to develop the recruitment skills of HR professionals and understand recruitment and training needs and support for tenants

Our ask of social housing providers:

- For housing providers to recruit on attitude as well as skill set
- For Common Waiting Lists to be used strategically to identify job and training requirements and aspirations of applicants and future tenants.
- For consideration to be given to child care provision for those being involved in work programmes
- That the sector commit to an outcomes focused approach
- That housing provider's co-ordinate digital inclusion, financial inclusion and TR&T strategies so a uniform approach is delivered to those who need support.

7. Further Information

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