



Involvement

Client Assessor Teams

Background

Client Assessor Teams are regional groups of clients from a range of different services across care and support. They visit or call services on the phone and speak to clients and colleagues. They assess how well our services are doing at delivering the client promise; award services a bronze, silver or gold standard for their performance and make recommendations for improvements.



What happened?

“ Tenants encouraged to take part hold between them a vast amount of untapped and valuable information and personal knowledge.

Client, Sheltered Housing Scheme ”

In the last 12 months we trained 57 Client Assessors and developed four regional teams who:

- Conducted 104 client service assessments (including service visits, telephone assessments and workshop based service assessments)
- Consulted nearly 319 clients at local services
- Awarded 13% services bronze, 66% services silver and 19% services gold.

Working with Client Assessors we developed an interactive workshop session to raise awareness of the Client Promise among clients, customers and colleagues.

Since July 2013 we delivered:

- 115 'Promises, Promises' sessions to over 550 clients, customers and colleagues.

We also:

- Developed a plan for coordinating and delivering client service assessments across all Care and Support regions.
- Produced six month client service assessment report and shared our findings with colleagues across the business.
- Developed new models and resource pack for involving older clients and clients with mental health needs in assessing our services.

What changed?

Findings from client service assessments identify areas of good practice in service delivery and areas for improvement.

Overall, we achieve a consistently high standard for 'People who care' and 'Safe place to live', while achieving consistently lower scores for 'Value for money'.

We shared client feedback, service scores and recommendations for improvements with colleagues across the business, resulting in changes at both national and local level.

National outcomes:

- Client service assessment results are combined with our peer review scores for individual services and reported to our Senior Leadership Team
- We developed a new service budget and value for money tool for local services to use to help explain local budgets and involve clients in making value for money judgements
- We developed and implemented a communications plan for national and regional involvement
- Client assessors provide an involvement information pack for clients at services they assess
- Involvement Works training is now part of our standard induction training for all colleagues
- Service assessment results shaped the priorities of our Business Assurance Services and will be used to identify the services our Health and Safety Team audit in 2014-15, influencing Home Group's risk management process
- We reviewed and improved our process for implementing sanctions for contractors where they fail to meet agreed targets and timescales for repairs
- Service assessment results and client feedback for 'People who care' is used in our national 'Living our Values' training programme for colleagues to reinforce our organisational value of 'caring'
- Service assessment feedback in some local areas has led to the delivery of regional road shows and workshops with clients to identify areas for improvement and develop regional improvement plans.



Local service outcomes:

- Improved procedures for reporting and monitoring logged repairs
- Working with Property Services to address maintenance issues
- Refurbishment of properties and communal areas
- Changes to local suppliers to improve quality of furniture and furnishings
- Increased involvement in property inspections and defects checks
- Better communication between staff and clients
- Improved promotion of involvement and increased opportunities to get involved (including increased involvement in recruitment)
- Better information on local service budgets, rent charges and opportunities to influence how the money is spent (including roll out of our new service budget and value for money tool)
- Involvement in improving out of hours and concierge services
- Improved local complaints procedures
- Improved communication with clients about how to change their Support Workers
- Introduction of additional phone and drop-in support services.

Outcomes for Client Assessors

“ Assessing services has given me a sense of involvement in Stonham and where I live. I know more about the organisation now and it has improved my confidence. ”
Client Assessor

Client Assessors agreed areas for personal development to measure during the course of their involvement. Clients reported improvements in all areas including:

- Happiness (up 39%)
- Confidence (up 50%)
- Independence (up 38%)
- Knowledge and understanding (up 50%)
- Skills (up 45%)
- Ability and confidence to travel (up 45%)
- Feeling valued and involved (up 52%)
- Trusted by colleagues and clients (up 52%)
- Leadership (up 41%)
- Empowerment (up 49%).

Outcomes for Colleagues

“ I feel able to encourage project staff and managers to engage in the client service assessment process. ”
Admin Team Leader

Administrative colleagues who coordinate service assessments and support client assessments during service visits all reported experiencing an increase in the following areas (both after training, and client service assessments):

- Confidence to involve clients (up 27.5%)
- Skills to involve clients (up 25.5%)
- Understanding of involvement (up 32%)
- Knowledge of client service assessments and the Client Promise (up 37%).

“ Being an Involvement Champion has opened doors for me. ”
Support Coordinator

Local Involvement Champions who support our client assessors to get involved reported an increase in skills and confidence as a result of their involvement. This builds colleagues' capacity, supports their professional development and empowers them to take on new roles and challenges within the business.

Impact

“ Clients feel the client assessor programme shows real commitment by the organisation to improve its services – informed by the experiences of the people who use them. ”
Business Contracts Manager

On Home Group:

Performance results and client feedback from client service assessments are helping to shape, change and influence our business, from decisions made at governance level through to changes and improvements at local service level; putting clients at the heart of everything we do.

Services now provide 'dashboards' of performance results (client service assessment results and peer review scores) for our regulators, commissioners and stakeholders. Giving clients a clear role in scrutinising our services helps us to meet our regulatory requirements and supports our submission for TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Accreditation

Involving clients in independently scrutinising our services is identified as excellent practice in involvement and raises our profile externally within the care and support and housing sectors.

“ It's a great opportunity for clients to give something back and use their experiences to support others in making positive changes and improvements to services. ”
Senior Client Services Manager

Through our independent client service assessments, we're reaching and involving increased numbers of clients from groups we previously identified as under-represented in involvement, such as:

- Clients with mental health support needs
- Older clients
- Young clients
- Women
- Ex-offenders.

This supports our business wide approach to equality and diversity and is helping us to deliver our national equality and diversity action plan.

On customers and clients:

“ Being a Client Assessor has given me valuable skills that have made me more employable.

Becky, Client Assessor ”

Some Client Assessors have gained full time employment (with Home Group through our Apprenticeships scheme and with external organisations) as a result of their involvement. Others are now volunteers with Home Group or in training and education.

Their involvement has led to improved support outcomes with some clients successfully moving on from their services earlier than expected.

“ I'm starting to feel like a valued part of the team and society as a whole. If I wasn't involved I would have reoffended.

Sean, Client Assessor ”



Cost

Total cost of client service assessments for 2013-14 is £2,154, with an average cost per service assessment of £30.

This represents an overall saving of £2963 and average saving of £89 per client service assessment (when compared with costs for 2012-13).

Is it value for money?

Our independent group of customers and clients said our client assessor teams represent:

- Low cost
- High impact
- **High value for money.**