

The Tenant Inspector Project

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The Partners

Sandwell MBC

A large Local Authority with over 34,000 properties.

This project includes staff from both Housing Direct (landlord) and Housing Strategy and Enabling Services

Sandwell Community Information & Participation Service Ltd (SCIPS)

A registered charity and independent representative organisation of tenants and residents in Sandwell.



Tenant involvement has come a long way....

- **Tenants associations and federations – consulting and involving**
- **Highly informed and motivated individuals and groups – Monitoring and reviewing – influential recommendations**
- **Setting the Agenda – Where the tenants' interests lie**
- **Hands on active involvement**

Active Involvement in the Inspectorates

Both the Audit Commission and The Housing Corporation emphasise the importance to their task of active, hands on, tenant input

- **“seeing ourselves as others see us.”**
- **Comparing the advertised service with the service as experienced**
- **Reality checks and mystery shopping**
- **Focus groups, interviews and surveys**

The Aim of the Project

“To train tenants to enable them to become inspectors of the Housing Service”

To develop closer working relations between tenants and housing officers

To develop services based on the needs of tenants

Make the inspection process part of the Tenant Participation Compact.

The Stages

The project was established over 5 stages

- **Research and Development**
- **Promotion and Recruitment**
- **Implementation**
- **Review**
- **Sustainability**

Promotion

- **Circulate information packs – local offices, supermarkets, libraries, town centres, etc**
- **Hold “Taster” sessions, to explain the project (have fun!)**
- **Advertising can be expensive – look for audience**
- **Staff consultation training and awareness is essential**
 - **Opportunity to feedback on concerns and issues**
 - **Help to highlight obstacles to success**
 - **Opportunity to help profile inspectors**

Recruitment

- **Formal process developed to meet criteria**
 - **Age range**
 - **Ethnicity range**
 - **Gender**
 - **Experience of tenant involvement**
- **Developed application forms to extract this information**
- **Involved tenants in developing this criteria and also in short-listing for the final Inspectors**

DON'T HIRE TOO MANY INSPECTORS TO START – CAN BE TOO MUCH TO COPE WITH IN THE EARLY STAGES (16)

Training

- **Core Training needs to be delivered on such things as;**
 - **Equal Opportunities**
 - **Being Professional – attitudes, behaviour, punctuality**
 - **Conflicts of interest**
 - **Code of Conduct**

- **Specialised training on inspection techniques**
 - **Mystery Shopping**
 - **Surveys / Questionnaires**
 - **Face-to-face interviews**
 - **Process Audits**
 - **Etc...**

How to make a success of the project?

- **Good recruitment process**
- **Rewards – early discussion on payment methods**
- **Training – ensure consistency and professionalism**
- **Information – open up a network for inspectors to use**
- **Advice and assistance – support role for staff**

How to make a success of the project? (part 2)

- **Getting the approach right – learn from others (toolkit)**
- **Be aware of confidentiality issues**
- **How are you going to report the findings?**
- **Make sure there is feedback from recommendations**
- **Learn from the process**

Sandwell's Tenant Inspectorate

Our progress so far...

What happens next?

Progress so far...

From the inspections we have undertaken, we have already received the following positive results;

Improved access and signage at various local offices, and,

Informed a review of the customer care strategy in local offices through Mystery Customer inspections.

Improved telephone call handling out of hours through a survey of answer phones systems.

Challenged the repairs receipting procedures

Reduced the paperwork involved in Estate Management through process auditing.

Findings are always both positive and negative!

What happens next?...

- **Sandwell MBC is pursuing an Arms Length Management Organisation approach to Housing Management**
- **In order to obtain extra money through this we need to demonstrate good or excellent services when inspected by Government Inspectors**
- **Tenant Inspectors are working on delivering a series of inspections on our Service Improvement Plan to make sure we reach this target by 2005.**