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## CASE STUDY: SOUTHWAY HOUSING TRUST

Customer Service Excellence is a framework that supports organisations to improve customer service – Southway Housing Trust has improved performance against commitments made in their Customer Charter

**Southway Housing Trust** is a committed and forward-thinking not-for-profit local housing company who are passionate about providing excellent homes and outstanding customer care. They own and manage almost 6,000 homes across Burnage, Chorlton, Didsbury and Withington.

Southway Housing took over those homes from Manchester City Council in 2007 following a ballot among council tenants. They first achieved the CSE standard in February 2012, although our 'journey' started a couple of years prior to this as we used the standard as a 'self auditing tool' when developing our internal customer care framework.

### Introduction

Southway Housing Trust first looked at the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Standard back in 2010 when they started to develop their internal customer care framework – 'Everyone Matters'.

The framework was developed entirely by internal staff and they used the standard as a way of self auditing their services to identify where they needed to improve, and also identifying the process and (best) practices that they wanted their framework to support.

They looked at various accreditations and awards available and felt that the CSE standard was the 'best fit' for their organisation.

### What they Hoped to Achieve

They wanted to identify where they needed to improve, and use this as a starting point to encourage innovation around these topics by internal staff.

They found that whilst they had lots of examples against each of the criteria included – in some cases they lacked a 'formal' method of both recording, recognising and celebrating their achievements .

“The standard is relevant to ANY organisation with customers. Like anything, it depends on how you use it and the effort you are prepared to put into the process.

You should have a clear idea on what you wish to achieve before applying. It’s a two way process and I think that the more you are prepared to put in the greater the benefit will be”

Luke Benfield,  
Contact Centre Manager



Speaking to Luke Benfield, Southway Housing’s Contact Centre Manager, we asked ‘Since working with the Standard, what tangible outcomes and benefits has your organisation seen?’

“The main benefit that we have seen as an organisation would certainly be the ‘robustness’ of our framework which has improved the flow (and raised the profile) of customer feedback and also improved performance against the commitments made in our customer charter.

We were delighted with the awards of ‘**compliance plus**’ as we felt these were reflective of the work that has been done in these areas.”

How was the assessment and review process? Did you find it beneficial?

“The process was certainly beneficial in that it helped bring a much needed structure to some of our internal processes. All the staff involved thoroughly enjoyed meeting with the assessor as did our customers.

How will you be taking Customer Service Excellence forward in the future?

“We will certainly be trying to maintain the standard by regular audits over the coming years. We are also keen to take part in the ‘best practice’ forums hosted by Centre for Assessment to network with other organisations who have achieved the standard.”

Would you recommend Customer Service Excellence to other organisations?

“Yes – I think if your looking to use the standard as a tool to improve processes then I would recommend Customer Service Excellence

If on the other hand your just looking for an award to put in your trophy cabinet then there are easier ones to achieve. Its pretty in depth – but then that’s what we wanted. There is certainly a level of commitment required if you wish to maintain the standard going forward.”

In conclusion which part of the journey has been the most fulfilling?

“The staff discussions around the various criteria included within the framework. Some great stuff came out of these sessions such as a variety of ‘best practice’ guides developed by staff.”

If you would like to know more about Customer Service Excellence, contact the team on 01925 256650 or email [enquiries@centreforassessment.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@centreforassessment.co.uk)

