

Committee	Date:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	14/07/2015
Subject: Professional Training Programme	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information

Summary

In 2014, the Housing Service devised an industry-specific training programme for staff to ensure their continued professional development. This was based on a skills analysis of all staff and was also linked to training needs identified in their appraisals.

Feedback from staff was very positive and it has made a real difference for frontline staff in particular, who have previously not received any industry-specific training. Following the success of the project, the programme has now been expanded to incorporate courses on topics identified by the People Division, and is open to all staff in the Community & Children's Services Department. The 2015/16 joint training programme covers a wide range of topics and types of training and has been a great way for staff from each Division to work more closely with each other and to build relationships. This year's programme includes:

- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Lone Working - Personal safety matters
- OCD and hoarding
- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding children and child protection
- Homelessness and its prevention
- Working with adults with additional needs
- Dealing with Damp / Disrepair
- Personal Budgets (Universal Credit)

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In 2014 the Housing Service set up a Professional Development Programme, offering industry-specific training to all City of London housing staff. The externally and internally commissioned courses seek to address staff training needs which are not catered for by the City of London's corporate training programme.

2. As Housing is a specialist industry, often our staff training requirements are quite specific – perhaps around a particular piece of legislation, a particular aspect of the law pertinent to Housing, hands-on qualifications for our estate staff, or best-practice information sessions to keep staff up to date on national housing issues (welfare reform, for example). Whilst many of the City of London’s corporate courses are useful and relevant (and are well- attended by our staff) we identified gaps in in terms of housing-specific topics.
3. The programme was the first time many Housing staff had been given the opportunity to attend professional training. We had occasionally brought in external speakers on specific topics or sent staff on courses, but this tended to be in reaction to a particular demand or opportunity, and we had never before had a planned or co-ordinated approach.

2014/15 Programme

4. Before agreeing the topics to be included in the 2014/15 training programme, we conducted a ‘Skills Scan’. This was a one-off project which looked at the job descriptions of all housing staff and extracted details of all the required skills/knowledge for that role. Managers then worked with their staff to identify any areas of training need in relation to this.
5. We also used the appraisal process to help identify training requirements. The Learning & Development section of the staff appraisal seeks to identify training need. Some can be met in-house and these are collated and processed by HR. But to ensure we monitor any housing-related training needs, we have developed a simple template for managers to record the learning and development needs of their staff. This gives us the opportunity to monitor identified needs and take them into account when planning our housing-specific training programme.
6. Taking this information into account, we then worked with external providers (including Housing Quality Network, Southwark Mediation Service, UK Border Agency and others) and in-house experts (such as the Benefits Team and Fraud Team) to develop a ‘tailor-made’ Housing training programme. We did this by working with managers to determine which required skills training could not be met by the existing Corporate training programme and taking note of any emerging trends (local and national) within the housing industry.
7. The final programme for 2014-15 covered the following 16 topics:
 - Allocations Law (‘Eligibility for Social Housing’)
 - Universal Credit
 - Welfare Benefits for people coming from overseas
 - Fraud Document Awareness session
 - Facilitation - Residents’ Open Meetings
 - Alcohol & Drug Misuse
 - Introduction to Housing Law
 - Tenancy Law (‘Tenancies – Fixed Term & Flexible’ & ‘Tenancies & Licences’)
 - Leasehold Law (‘Introduction to Leasehold Service Charges & Debt Recovery’)

- Domestic Abuse Awareness
 - Mediation & Handling Conflict
 - Property inspections for non-technical staff
 - Advanced Housing Law
 - Counter Terrorism Awareness
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Legislation & Case Management
 - Welfare Benefits Reform Update
8. It can often be costly to send one or two individuals on external courses, so by 'buying in' blocks of bespoke in-house training, we not only addressed the identified training needs, but also trained more people at a reduced price. The 2014/15 programme represented a significant investment in staff – costing approximately £13,000 (this includes catering provided to attendees on full day courses).
9. The vast majority of courses were delivered at the Barbican Estate Office, with between 15 and 30 people attending each time. We had fantastic take-up of places, with several courses having a waiting list as they were so popular.

Feedback

10. The programme has been a real success, and resulted in some courses having a waiting list of people who were keen to attend next time. We have developed a good mix of internal and external courses and feedback from staff has been incredibly positive. Staff have told us they feel empowered, more confident in their roles and really appreciate the investment we have made in providing useful, practical courses which are relevant to their roles.
11. External training notifications are completed and sent to HR who update the Trent system so each individual's record holds details of training they have attended. We also take copies of any feedback forms collected at the end of each course before sending them on to the provider. We go through these to identify any comments or suggestions to improve the programme. Examples of some of the feedback received is shown below:
- *“The training session was really informative, with plenty of opportunity for discussion. It will definitely assist in improving my skills and knowledge of tenancy management”.*
 - *“Training was excellent. The trainer explained everything very well and related examples to our problems and questions”.*

2015/16 Programme

12. We have now widened the remit of the programme to include courses that will be relevant to staff working in the People Division. We worked with the People Division to identify their training needs and then put together a programme which caters to both Housing and People staff and is open to staff throughout the department. This has been working well so far and is a great way to build relationships across teams and to help gain an understanding of how different teams operate.

13. The 2015/16 joint Housing & People Training Programme was launched in April 2015 and covers the following topics:

- Financial Inclusion: Workplace Champions
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Housing Law - Introduction
- Housing Law - Advanced
- Lone Working - Personal safety matters
- Leasehold Law
- OCD and hoarding
- Safeguarding Adults
- Professional boundaries for sheltered and supported housing staff
- Safeguarding children and child protection
- Homelessness and its prevention
- Working with adults with additional needs
- Drug and alcohol awareness
- Property Inspection for Non-Technical Staff (Day 1 and Day 2)
- Fire Safety Awareness
- Mock H&S court case for senior managers
- Working with adults with additional needs
- Customer services training for contact centre staff
- Dealing with Damp / Disrepair
- Personal Budgets (Universal Credit)

14. The cost of the 2015/16 programme is projected to be slightly higher than last year (approximate figure of £17,000), primarily as we are expanding the variety of courses available and also because we are aiming to provide some fairly in-depth two day courses. We will be offering some courses more than once to ensure that everyone who wants to can attend, and we are also working with the Departmental Health & Safety team to stage a mock court case for estate staff, delivered by real barristers. This will really help to drive home the fact that Health & Safety is everyone's responsibility.

15. The Housing Service has also now been given access to the People Division's training links with Goldsmith's, as many topics covered also overlap with services provided by Housing staff. This joint venture has been successful to date and staff have expressed their approval of the new arrangements. We have also explored the availability of online training modules and will be looking to expand on this during the coming year.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – 2015/16 Housing & People Division Training programme

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