

Autumn 2008

We've got your number...



Following the discussions at the Globe event, Ian Williams has produced a leaflet outlining some of the key findings and ideas from attendees. These include:

- Although many organisations have a vision, value and mission in place, there needs to be a golden thread which ensures these follow through all business plans
- Making services as accessible as possible to customers, in a wide variety of ways, is critical
- Don't duplicate plans, integrate them
- The analysis, identification and resolution of common maintenance and repairs faults and putting them right first time often leads to significant improvements in customer satisfaction.

# Reaching for the stars



**Facilities management experts, housing associations, local authority senior staff and sector consultants from the world of social housing joined forces in June to discuss how to raise standards for residents, and help improve the number of stars given as part of the Audit Commission inspection process.**

A half-day seminar held at Shakespeare's Globe, in London, saw consultant inspector Ian Harries, of Harries Associates, guide delegates through delivering service improvements, best practice and methods of improvement for landlords.

The event, co-ordinated by Ian Williams, highlighted the benefits of long-term partnerships to improving customer service, and the need for housing associations to engage their service providers to support and improve their inspection results.

A key practical tool lauded by those attending was Ofcom's new 0300 number to enable customers to make savings on calls, whether using a landline or mobile. The new prefix will be available to charities and not-for-profit organisations.



**Mike Turner, development director at Ian Williams, with Ian Harries, consultant inspector, and Alan Soper, managing director.**

Other subjects covered in the session included maintenance, communication, estate management, rents and how development impacts on residents.

Neill Benham, business development manager with Ian Williams, said: "This is the first time we have brought so many people into the same room to discuss how working together can achieve a better service for residents."

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"We hope this conference will encourage further sharing of good practice and help more organisations identify areas for improvement."

- If you'd like a leaflet on the Globe event, please visit our website, [www.ianwilliams.co.uk](http://www.ianwilliams.co.uk) or email [enquiries@ianwilliams.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ianwilliams.co.uk)

# Customer care champions

**Staff across Ian Williams have received customer care training to further improve their approach with clients' customers.**

A number of customer care champions were initially selected for the intensive training sessions, and then tasked with rolling out the programme locally to ensure that all staff received the training.

As part of the work, staff were asked to think about what a customer care charter would look like, and then showed the agreed company charter.

Other elements of the training included who Ian Williams' customer groups are, what the needs of these groups are, how to deal with problems and evaluating the effectiveness of customer care.

Sian Pearce, training and development manager, said:



"The intention of this training is to empower good staff to teach others about the value of customer service. We are committed to continuous improvement and delivering results for our clients, and this focus on customer care is a key part of that."

Customer care champion Amanda Bairstow, who has helped deliver the training to

more than 40 employees within London and Kent, said: "I know that what I am doing is worthwhile from the compliments that I receive from residents regarding our workforce when I visit the various sites, and the thank you cards and letters that the residents send in for the resident liaison officers.

"To me customer care

means treating our ultimate customers, the residents, with respect and taking time out to ensure they are kept informed before, during and after any projects we complete in their home. It is our responsibility to ensure the customer is happy and we always need to remember that we are privileged to work in their homes."

## Helping young people with DIY skills

**Younger people living in the shadow of homelessness are being given the chance to pick up basic DIY skills through a pioneering new scheme in Wales.**

Following the success of a pilot project in Birmingham, Ian Williams has teamed up with Shelter Cymru, B&Q and Llamau - which works with socially excluded homeless people - to run weekly sessions to demonstrate skills such as basic plumbing, tiling, electrics and gardening.

The six younger people,

aged 17 to 20, are currently living in supported housing projects run by charity Shelter and are expected to move on to their own flats in the near future.

The idea is to give the younger people greater confidence to maintain and improve their own home when they settle somewhere, giving them a better chance of maintaining a secure, independent life.

Rhian Jones, education co-ordinator for Shelter Cymru, said: "Younger people gaining their first home often do not

have the skills to carry out the basic maintenance jobs necessary to make it an enjoyable place to live in.

"This partnership with Ian Williams, and Llamau, which works in south Wales with socially excluded homeless people, will provide a template for future similar projects and help prevent younger people losing or giving up their homes because of a lack of skills."

Ian Williams is a long-term supporter of Shelter and has been an official sponsor of the charity for two years.



Lowdown on...

# Graduate development

**Companies which demonstrate commitment to the development of their staff are more likely to have a skilled and committed workforce.**

That's the view of one product of Ian Williams' graduate management training scheme which is helping us retain a settled workforce and attract high-calibre applicants for vacant roles.

Nick Wells, aged 25, graduated from Stirling University in 2005 with a degree in business and management. Keen to join a firm that offered a graduate training programme so he could mould his skills to a specific sector while working towards a management role, he found many firms did not support such schemes.

However, Ian Williams was one name that did stand out and Nick has never looked back. He is now a response maintenance manager with total responsibility for the company's response maintenance activities in Bristol and its surrounding counties.

"I was looking for a firm that offered a good management training course and Ian Williams was a name that came up in my search," said Nick, of Bristol.

"Construction was an area I was quite interested in getting into and so I applied for the Ian Williams Graduate scheme. At the time I didn't know a lot about the company but the way the graduate management training scheme is structured, you get to work in different areas of the business - both geographically and operationally - to really learn what it is all about. I have spent time involved with painting, insurance repairs, and planned and responsive maintenance.

"The company ensures all graduates on the scheme have the opportunity to develop the operational and commercial awareness which will be essential to their management progression.

"It is very positive to know that Ian Williams really believes in the programme and that there are good management positions at the end of it. They really are investing in the future of the company in a way that many others are not as committed to.

"I believe companies offering this type of support to graduates is vital to ensure the continued supply of high-quality managers in a sector which is currently experiencing skills shortages across the workforce. Ian Williams sees this and continues to invest in the future."

- For more information on the graduate scheme, please email [enquiries@ianwilliams.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ianwilliams.co.uk)



## Any colour as long as it's green

**Ian Williams has turned its attention to the sustainability of paint application, with the launch of new guidelines on its practices.**

The organisation is looking at the role of colour in improving mood and the environment, as well as paint recycling and compliance of painting work with the Disability Discrimination Act.

With more than 1,000 painting projects completed each year, from bungalows to schools through to lighthouses and suspension

bridges, Ian Williams is keen to ensure it sets the bar for eco-friendly practices and is best placed to advise clients on what they should be expecting from a contractor.

As well as looking at painting, the guide considers how its commitment to apprentices, customer care and right first time delivery can contribute to economic and environmental sustainability.

- To request a copy, visit [www.ianwilliams.co.uk](http://www.ianwilliams.co.uk) or email [enquiries@ianwilliams.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ianwilliams.co.uk)

## Harrogate happenings

**Ian Williams was out and about at Harrogate this year, including sponsoring a Housing Forum event for the fourth year running.**

The Housing Forum event, which saw the launch of Ian Williams' culture and diversity brochure, was attended by more than 60 delegates.

A number of the senior management team attended the event to find out about best practice in the sector and to meet key clients.

## Education planner

**The 2008/2009 Ian Williams' education wallplanner is available for the new school year.**

Detailing common maintenance tasks and key contacts, it has been designed to assist school bursars.

- To request a copy, visit [www.ianwilliams.co.uk](http://www.ianwilliams.co.uk) or email [enquiries@ianwilliams.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ianwilliams.co.uk)

# On your marks

## Ian Williams teamed up with Raglan in August to launch a joint office.

To ensure residents get a seamless service, Ian Williams has moved a number of staff to Raglan's Leicester base to work alongside the association's housing team.

Its opening follows the signing of a partnership deal between the two organisations which will see Ian Williams work across 3,000 of Raglan's homes across the Midlands and the East of England.

The 15-year contract will see Ian Williams take responsibility for the maintenance of the homes, including providing a responsive repairs, void property maintenance, gas servicing and breakdown, Decent Homes works, and an out-of-hours repairs service.



# New contracts for Ian Williams

## Russet Homes

Russet Homes has appointed Ian Williams to help ensure its homes stay in top condition.

The housing association, which owns and manages around 6,600 properties across Tonbridge and Mailing, Kent, has signed a two-year contract.

Worth £750,000 a year - and with the option of a third year - the new partnership will see Ian Williams' Maidstone-based team take responsibility for both internal and external decorations of Russet Homes properties, as well as repairs to the housing stock.

## Caradon Council

Ian Williams has been awarded a five-year contract to maintain Caradon District Council's 3,500 homes.

The new service is set to start in November and will be based on the principle of getting the job done well the first time.

Ian Williams will also carry out larger works such as refurbishing empty council properties to ensure they meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Councillor Beryl Martin, Caradon's housing and community services portfolio holder, said: "The new contract will deliver a quality approach to council housing maintenance, with the focus firmly on improving tenant satisfaction and customer service. The Tenants' Forum has been fully involved in the selection process, ensuring that our new contractor has a clear picture of tenants' expectations for the service right from the start and Caradon's determination to see those expectations met."

## Tai Pawb



Mike Turner, development director at Ian Williams, is set to represent the company at the upcoming Welsh Tai Pawb conference on equality.

The event, to be held in Cardiff this September, will consider the role of contractors in ensuring equality and meeting the needs of diverse customers. Also speaking will be Leighton Andrews, Deputy Minister, Regeneration, at the Welsh Assembly Government.

Ian Williams is working with Tai Pawb raising awareness of equality and diversity amongst housing providers in Wales.

If you have any comments, or would like further information, on any of the articles in this issue of **Review**, please fill in the form below:

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