

Steps are Central & Cecil's strategic partner in creating a culture where resident experience tops everyone's agenda...

Objectives

Steps joined C&C in 2011 to support the organisation in consistently delivering a personalised service and achieving customer service excellence. Holding a 10 year Investors in People Achievement Award, C&C continues to invest in their people to ensure they are capable of shaping future services in collaboration with customers.

Ongoing objectives include:

- To provide C&C people with the knowledge, skills and attitude to:
 - enjoy delivering an exceptional service
 - exceed customer expectations
 - build relationships of trust and respect
- To encourage leadership and ownership at all levels

Approach

Residents had identified the need to improve the service and we spent a total of 49 hours listening to C&C customers (internal and external) to build up a detailed picture of what is happening on the front line. We included staff at all levels, holding focus groups and coffee mornings at schemes and care homes, including residents and their families, and capturing the customer voice in a 'Vox Pop' which was disseminated across C&C.

First Wave:

126 passionate people from across the organisation attended workshops and helped C&C build on the positives that already existed. Sabine Weigert, HR Business Partner Learning, explains, "*The First Wave was all about listening and learning more about what staff and residents think works well and not so well and where the barriers are. Steps were really good at identifying the real issues and behaviours that needed to be addressed.*"

We delivered an effective and engaging Customer Service Learning programme which was funded by the Skills for Care Workforce Development Innovation Fund 2011 - 2012.

Participants were encouraged to explore what was and wasn't in their control and to take learning action plans to their line managers to tackle issues they could positively impact.

Leadership Forum involvement:

Outcomes of the First Wave sessions were played back to the Leadership Forum which consists of C&C senior managers, including the Executive Team. The Forum examined the role of senior management in enabling a truly customer-focussed culture. It placed particular emphasis on running team meetings where managers encourage an open dialogue with staff, hearing their views and empowering them to make positive change.

At a follow up session three months later, leaders reported back on the discussions they had had and the improvements that were implemented in their area. The session focussed on how to show inspirational leadership, promote ownership and it helped leaders explore their

own personal responsibility, power to influence and their ability to overcome barriers to customer service excellence.

Second Wave

A total of 18 half-day sessions were run from May to September 2012 for all staff and built on the positive energy generated by the First Wave. The focus shifted more towards internal customers and how people treat each other in a respectful and dignified way. *“This is really important”, Sabine says, “As there is a clear link between how we treat each other and how we treat our residents. Their satisfaction is linked to staff satisfaction and how empowered, confident and skilled our people are.”*

Outcomes:

The new drama-based learning approach has created great excitement, reflection and engagement, which has resulted in a number of positive outcomes for C&C’s staff and residents. C&C has a clear evaluation strategy in place and the agreed short-and long-term, qualitative and quantitative measures have allowed the organisation to evidence a substantial impact after the first year of the programme.

Improvements include:

- Team meetings happening more frequently with customers prioritised on the agenda
- Leaders observing staff dealing with complaints there and then
- Customer feedback/complaints on the agenda for resident meetings
- Managers observing and staff commenting that they feel much more empowered to deal with issues
- Arrears have decreased dramatically within the care business area
- Overall customer satisfaction with repairs and maintenance has increased
- Project groups have improved practices such as the customer feedback process
- The Investors in People assessor captured a range of examples where people have changed their behaviour and where managers observed positive changes in staff

C&C will continue to focus on meaningful measures and track longer term outcomes in relation to the customer experience and key performance indicators.

“C&C are committed to providing an excellent service to our residents. It is therefore important that we know what residents want and need and the best way to understand this is to ensure we have staff who have the right skills and attitude to gather this information, especially at the front line”, says Caroline Tiller, CEO of Central & Cecil.

“The partnership with Steps created an entirely unique learning environment which has captured everyone’s imagination and motivated staff, providing us with the skill and opportunity to do things differently, and importantly, enjoy doing so. Our journey to achieving customer excellence has started well and we will continue to develop innovative and exciting ways to get to our destination.”