

LIFE Housing Forum

Report 2012



"The tenants that came from Farnborough and Fleet houses appeared to get so much out of the day – they enjoyed it and participated in the workshops."

LIFE Housing is one of the largest providers of accommodation for pregnant women and unsupported mothers aged 16-25 years in the UK. Our comprehensive service offers a real, practical alternative to abortion and prepares tenants for independent living with their children in the future.

We have 23 houses and six community services across the UK. Last year we supported 285 service-users (over a third of them under 18) of whom 95% were satisfied with the service. Many move on being able to manage their income better, in better health, many in training or employment and with 77% reporting improved self-confidence.

We held our second annual Housing Forum on 13 September 2012, a popular event designed to highlight potential areas of improvement in the service, celebrate achievements and provide tenants with a greater understanding of LIFE's services. 15 current tenants, one former tenant, 25 staff members, two volunteers and one LIFE trustee attended, with 16 children cared for in a professional crèche for the day.

Life 

LOVING LIFE, OFFERING HOPE

Through a series of interactive workshops, tenants, staff and volunteers participated in celebrating the main achievements of the last year and contributed ideas on how to manage the challenges now being faced.

"Tenants who attended weren't happy with the crèche facility provided – they didn't feel the staff managed with the children."



Workshop One: Relationships

Participants discussed the importance of managing expectations and needs in a healthy relationship and how these evolve over time. The session encouraged participants to think about relationships in a different way.

Workshop Two: Peer mentoring

The support that tenants and ex-tenants can offer to their peers in similar situations is invaluable. Both tenants and staff looked at the skills required to be peer mentors, the benefits that it offered and ways of getting more people involved.

We'd like:
A flow chart and FAQs to guide us through the process

✓ **It's now on the LIFE intranet**

We'd like:
To raise the profile of peer mentoring and hear from current mentors

✓ **We'll put articles in the Tenant Newsletter, info in the Tenant Handbook and make it a priority for staff**



Workshop Three: Care - Listening skills

Many tenants entering the Housing service will not have had contact with the LIFE Care service. This workshop outlined how important skilled listening is in the delivery of the care service and gave people an opportunity to sample and practise this through short exercises.

Workshop Four: Personalising Life Skills

Staff, volunteers and tenants discussed how to further personalise Life Skills to better meet the needs of individual tenants.



We'd like:
More group activities outside the houses

✓ **Tenants will have £10 each per month to decide how to spend as a group**

We'd like:
To use WiFi when staff not around

✓ **Tenants will have round-the-clock access to WiFi**

We'd like:
To extend the activities which qualify as Life Skills and some help with costs for these

✓ **We'll develop this list and show it to tenants and staff**

We'd like:
One person to be first contact for volunteers

✓ **We've appointed a Volunteer Coordinator**

We'd like:
Simplified paperwork

✓ **We're reviewing volunteer procedures**

Workshop Five: Working with Volunteers

Participants looked at what volunteers did within their projects, how much time they volunteered for and how they were inducted and involved.

Workshop Six: Tenants' Newsletter

Tenants would like to see eye-catching design and info like new baby announcements, a problem page, advice, stories, puzzles, recipes and shop promos.



We'd like:
A new banner and title

✓ **Congratulations to the Telford house who won the competition to design a new banner winning a £20 voucher**

We'd like:
Every tenant to see it

✓ **We've increased how many we print**

Group session – Mapping Case Studies

Tenants' personal stories can be a source of inspiration to other service-users and reveal the true nature of LIFE's housing service. It's important that people know what we do through tenants' own experiences. Using a template, tenants and staff saw how easy they are to produce and service-users seemed comfortable telling their stories.



"I really enjoyed putting my input into the newsletter life skills and learning how other houses do life skills different to us."

We'd like to see...
Less paperwork

✓ **We're looking at ways to streamline admin work**

We'd like to see...
More time spent with tenants to provide emotional support

✓ **Individual Support Plans will have structured time to address emotional needs**

We want to keep:
this Forum, LIFE Skills, supporting young mums and looking for new ideas.

✓ **We promise to continue including tenants and service-users in decision-making and implementing improvements.**

We'd like to see...
Life Skills for Community service-users

✓ **We have provided a budget for this**

Suggestions

It is vital that LIFE Housing delivers a service which is responsive and relevant to the needs of the young women and children it helps. To this end, participants were asked to post their thoughts, ideas and suggestions on posters throughout the course of the day. On the left are some of their suggestions.

Evaluation of the Forum

The overwhelming majority of the tenants and staff thought the event was good or excellent overall, and particularly liked the opportunity to bring tenants, workers and volunteers together from different houses to share ideas.

Useful numbers and contacts

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Visit www.lifecharity.org.uk

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