Housing Frontline Futures
New era, changing role for housing officers

Findings and implications

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The Research Team

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Research Aims

1. **Understand the context for change** and implications for frontline housing delivery

2. **Specify key issues emerging** and provide examples of different responses across the sector

3. **Suggest recommendations for the future** – where should the sector look to adapt its responses and frontline delivery
Methodological approach

- Online professional survey
- Online tenant survey
- Appreciative inquiries
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Webinars
Responses

• 1054 survey responses
  • >257 different job titles/roles

• Good participation in interviews and focus groups

• Professional and tenant involvement in 4 Appreciative Inquiries
Key findings

• The nature of frontline roles is changing
• Customers’ needs are increasingly complex
• ‘Tenancy sustainment’ is increasingly important
• More commercially minded going forward
• Recruitment for attitude and behaviours
• Technology = freedom to be ‘out on the patch’
• Tenant customers want to see their Housing Officer
• Competencies required = a higher level role
Why is the frontline changing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influencing Factor</th>
<th>Total rating count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Welfare Reform</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Housing supply</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Increasing gap between earnings and housing costs</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ageing Population</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Technological advances</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Grant Reduction</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How we do the core functions is changing
Seen as becoming more important in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercially minded</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to manage change</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically reflective practitioner/ self-awareness</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to be creative and respond according to the situation</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Can Do’ improvement focused</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to inspire and gain the confidence of others</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
... and one that is seen as becoming much less important in the future
On being commercially minded

“By commercial, I mean focused on maximising income, minimising costs, cut out waste, a different attitude and approach to customer care – it’s about attention, communication, knowing the customer well”
Ways in which the frontline can do this

- Develop a different relationship with residents and customers
- See potential problems ahead and stop them happening
- Income maximisation – everyone’s business
- Prioritise & act based on intelligence
- Better partnerships & use of local assets
- Demonstrate & measure social value
- Focus on value to tenant customers
"The housing officer"

My long term vision, to stand firm together
In all the rain, snow and hail, whatever the weather
To help each other, working as residents
Not just tenants paying our rents
We want an organisation with a very big heart
We’ll help: we all try to do our part

An officer we want, with ears like an elephant
Who sees and understands everything – is omnipresent
With degrees in everything, all sorts of genius
Sorts out all problems for every one of us
Superman, superwoman, we’re not fussied
Someone to stick around, someone to trust

Diversity, ethnicity, all are included
All the young people, no one’s precluded
With a smile and a loving, helping hand
Showing all work to our homes being planned

Sequin covered, leaving a trail of glitter
Immediately dissolving, not leaving litter
With wings to transport, all the better for seeing
A truly wonderful exceptional being

Poem by Valerie Schneider
Nottingham City Homes tenant
Picture summary
Two other important elements

IT developments

• Freeing up frontline workers’ time – to be ‘out on the patch’

• Automation and choice in accessing and managing services (channel shift)

• Digital divide – digital inclusion

• Social media – for conversations with tenant customers

Management of frontline roles

• Emerging management styles
  • Clarity of vision
  • Coaching and mentoring
  • Opportunities to learn and shape the job
  • Network development

• Walking the floor

• Performance management relating to frontline housing workers
Future frontline roles will be

• **Differentiated** – using data intelligence to guide how officer time is used, rather than providing a blanket service for all residents

• **Relational** – doing things with residents, rather than doing things to or for them

• **Interactive** – working alongside professionals from other disciplines to achieve a broader range of outcomes for residents

• **Varied and creative** – finding solutions, even if they lie outside of ‘normal activity’

• **Engaged and impactful** – doing things with the intention of having a positive impact on people’s lives and the organisation’s bottom line

• **Novel and anticipatory** – doing something now to avoid negative consequences later on
Competencies required

• Ability to be effective in a quickly changing environment
• Commercial awareness
• Ability to solve problems
• Good listening and communication (people) skills
• Resilience and emotional intelligence
• A ‘can do’ improvement-focused attitude
• Ability to analyse and interpret customer insight information
• Ability to be self-aware and critically reflective
• Confidence to assess and take calculated risks
• Ability to connect experience on the ground with bigger picture
• Willingness to make positive contribution to team culture
• Ability to self-manage
Implications

• Your frontline roles will be changing
  • whether or not it’s on your organisations’ plan of action
• Embracing and manage change is better than letting it happen to you
• The core roles won’t change, but how you do them almost certainly will
• Leadership is everyone’s responsibility
  • including your frontline
• Managers will need to change too
  • enabling management style that creates conditions for others to succeed
• Recruit for attitude and competencies
  • and develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours
Where next?

• An opportunity for the social housing sector to reflect and redefine purpose and roles

• The research team – Merron, Lisa and Jacq – can offer change programmes to enhance the value of your frontline and managerial roles. We start with where your organisation is at and take you where your organisation wants to get to.

• CIH are also disseminating findings through various channels
Thank you for listening

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