



Lean Business Solutions



Case Study - Voids

The Customer: The Wrekin Housing Trust

The Wrekin
Housing Trust

★ **The Challenge:** Voids

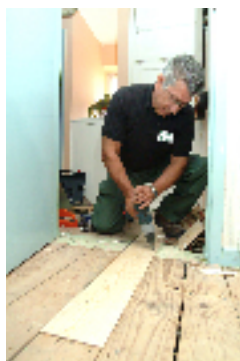
★ **The Solution:** Lean Intervention

★ **The Results:** Sustainable tenancies

Although a strong performer in the area of voids turnaround, The Wrekin Housing Trust knew that there was still work needed to improve sustainability and customer satisfaction. Lean thinking had helped other areas of the organisation to streamline their processes and increase efficiency so Lean Business Solutions was recommended to help bring about continuous improvement to the area of voids.

When the lean thinking project initially looked at the weaknesses of the current process it found that the emphasis was firmly placed on turnaround times and cost. Customer satisfaction, quality, sustainability and team morale came lower down on the list of priorities. The teams responsible were working flat out to stand still and there was a question mark as to whether the Trust's motto "pride in our homes" was actually filtering through to the end product.

Lean Business Solutions helped the project team to stand back and look at the bigger picture of what was currently happening. It soon became apparent that it was one big jumble. By mapping the process it became clear that it was more Trust-oriented than customer-oriented, and the team uncovered a range of issues. Too many people were involved in the process, roles and responsibilities were unclear and conflicting departmental responsibilities led to inconsistencies throughout the process.



Lean Business Solutions guided the team using a step-by-step approach, to map out existing processes and identify those that were relevant from those that weren't.

The team soon saw that to get to where they wanted to be the key was to focus on customers; to involve them throughout the process, manage their expectations and ultimately delight them. Void properties should be ready to live in, not just ready to let. The processes employed would need to be standard across the organisation.

Lean Business Solutions guided the project team to identify the parts of the current voids process that were of no value to the customer and to question why some things were done and why others weren't. For example, vital information was being missed because customers giving notice were asked where they were going to but not why they were leaving. Valuable time was being wasted because nothing happened once notice was given during the entire notice period. Once relet, there was no planned tenancy start date, this would often be a last minute decision. And a number of follow up works would be carried out after the tenancy start date.





By scrutinising the whole process from beginning to end and challenging waste areas, a new process was developed that is measurable and clearly defined. The panic has been removed and the new process is more planned and will be standard across the Trust. And on top of this the new ways of working have given the opportunity to turn around most of the Trust's empty properties within five days.

Notice periods will be used effectively; now the whole process of reletting will start as soon as notice is given and all void work will be done before the new tenant moves in. With sustainability at the heart of the project, a formal and considered discussion with the incoming customer will take place before sign-up. This will identify whether the customer is able to afford the rent and manage their finances and allow the Trust to tailor its services to those customers who need help managing their tenancy.

The tenancy start date will mean just that - when the home is ready to let and live in. This is an ideal start to a sustainable tenancy; a customer can move into their new home that is clean, safe and ready to live in with utilities switched on and payment details all set up. All of this will be done on time and at the lowest cost.

Estimates have shown that the cost reductions from the shorter turnaround time and reduced repair and clearance costs will be in the region of £400,000 p.a.

Results Achieved:

- Customer has become focus of entire process
- Potential to reduce void turnaround from 12 to 5 days
- Resources freed up to focus on sustainable tenancies
- Increased employee morale and job satisfaction
- Standardised lean processes rolled out organisation-wide

"This has been an excellent example of a far-reaching project. Rather than hand-picking the group we benefited from a mixture of backgrounds and skills, from all levels. LBS became fully integrated into our team and the cooperation from other parts of the organisation has been nothing short of phenomenal. It has turned into a fantastic team-building opportunity and employees have commented on the empowerment and satisfaction that they felt from being involved. Team morale has increased noticeably."

Kevin Diss, Tenant Services Manager, The Wrekin Housing Trust



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