

Cernach Housing Association

"Glasgow's First Gold!"



- Cernach have been IIP accredited since 200 and achieved Gold in 2014
- Using IIP accreditation and advisory services have changed the culture of the organisation
- Benchmarking themselves on the QEF of 32 housing associations, have made positive strides on every indicator

What was the IIP motivation?

Speaking to Investors in People Scotland, Jean Thomson, Director; Gavin Burt, Housing Service Manager; and Stephen McQuillan, IIP Specialist, tell us the impact that IIP has had.

Jean Thomson; "We knew we had financial challenges, and welfare reform on the way, and the impact that that would have financially. The three key measures are the rental income, maximising it, making sure properties don't lie empty and that we maintain them. We also need to ensure that we can attract people to the area, and that they want to stay, work and live in the area, and then there's the cultural challenge of the management model being very traditional."



Cernach have moved to a new style of management where staff are empowered to make decisions.

Jean Thomson; "We used to have performance reviews, twice a year, but they have gone. We meet once a month now. The team have really embraced the new 1:1 documents which they bring to the VMB (Visual Measures Board) meetings because there is a direct correlation between one and the other. Beforehand with the six monthly review, it used to be quite a lengthy document.

"We don't say 'will you do this?' anymore, it's 'well I'll do that' and through our 1:1 conversations we're doing more coaching. Before this change the staff didn't really know what I or the managers were doing whereas they do now.

Stephen; "It was fantastic to see how the team developed their outlook and shifted their thinking from being just a landlord to being in the business of improving people's lives."

"Everything that we do fits into one of our four new categories, but we never thought of that before and it was just like a light bulb moment."

Jean Thomson
Director

What was the impact?

Using a game based activity day, the team explored their 4 key values of improving lives, protecting assets, engaging with customers and making it happen.

Jean Thomson; "We've changed the layout of the office to change the customer experience. Previously, everyone sat side on to the reception desk, but to improve that we've got everyone facing forward. They know that as soon as someone comes through the door that how they are approached is important. These things might not seem an awful lot, but they make a big difference.

"We've changed our company structure also. The housing officers became specialists on issues such as maximising income and improving the lives of our customers and also now tenant engagement. We also have a resident scrutiny panel.

"We are trying to build relationships with the community through activities. Just last Friday was our gala day, We also do an achievement award at three primary schools in the area and it's not about the child that's the cleverest, it's about the child that's improved the most, from one year to the next. This links in with our ethos of continuous improvement."

How did IIP help?

Jean; "One of the huge things for us was getting arrears down to income up. That in itself was a huge shift."

Gavin Burt; "We turned it round psychologically from being an arrears figure to an income generation figure."

Jean; "The staff now are also getting peer recognition that they weren't before because there were small teams that were working in silos. Now all teams understand how their actions impact on others and how we're one team working towards the same objectives.

"What this really means though is that there has been a huge difference in our figures and our performance. We are ranked on a Quality Efficiency Forum (QEF) which is made up of 32 housing associations. Last year we were 19th on this list, and have now moved up to 6th on rent arrears. We have gone from the last to the top quartile. This also highlights how well we are using benchmarking.

Stephen; "Next we will look to further see how we can develop more young people into the world of work. It might be that we aren't giving them jobs, but with the support of the new Investors in Young People initiative it might be that we look to become job enablers.

