

CONTENTS

AN OVERVIEW	3
FIFTY FAMILIES A Survey of Residents Helped into Work	4-5
EXPLODING THE MYTHS ABOUT THE UNEMPLOYED	6
DRIVING THE PROJECT	7
CASE STUDIES	8-14
THE ROAD AHEAD	15



“The impact of our training and employment programme makes a huge difference to our residents’ lives”

FOREWORD

There's a large body of research that shows being out of work for six months or longer is associated with lower well-being among the long-term unemployed, their families and their communities.

Apart from the loss of income, the long-term unemployed tend to be in poorer health and have children with worse academic performance than similar people who are lucky enough to work.

Communities with a higher share of long-term unemployed workers also tend to have higher rates of crime and violence.

As a social housing provider it's in our interest to help people find work. We would much rather invest money into new housing projects knowing they are going to be successful communities, rather than impacted by unemployment and deprivation with the prospect of becoming the future sink estates.

The government takes a macro view on unemployment. We're in a unique position as a social housing provider because we're able to get to know the needs of our residents at a micro level.

This allows us to take a long-term view and provide structured, tailored support that meets the individual's needs. This creates a loop that contributes to the success of local communities, making them healthy and vibrant.

Our training and employment programme is a secret weapon. Within the context of the wider work we do, training and employment is a relatively small component. But its impact is very significant. It makes a huge difference to our residents' lives.

It also helps destroy the myth of the 'feckless poor'. It's easy to demonise and stereotype the marginalised. But in our experience those who do find themselves on the edges of society don't fit the common stereotypes.

No one consciously chooses to live in poverty. No one wants to live on the breadline. No one wants to struggle every day with the basics of life. We aim to ensure that our residents don't have to.

John Baldwin

Director of Housing, Thames Valley Housing

AN OVERVIEW

Thames Valley Housing Training and Employment

Training and employment for residents is central to Thames Valley Housing's (TVH) Communities Strategy.

We are in a unique position to help residents find work because we can invest the time and commitment that many residents require before they step into employment.

The process is dictated by the needs of residents. These needs can be complex and often invisible at first e.g. tackling a lack of confidence which can arise from long-term unemployment. But sometimes the reasons run deeper and can range from looking after young children to underlying psychological issues.

By adopting an approach that takes into account these factors, we provide a wide-ranging supportive role. Sometimes it may be as simple as helping somebody to put together a CV and cover letter, other times it may require helping to get a resident into the workplace with tailored training or a stint of voluntary work.

It also includes creating awareness about just what opportunities are available. Today's world of work can be complex and bewildering and often opportunities appear hidden because people are simply not aware of what is available.

Our role is wider than the Department of Work and Pension's executive agency, Job Centre Plus, and is essentially predicated on building relationships with residents. This approach works. Residents are not intimidated and understand that we are working in their best interests.

We use our supply chain to create employment opportunities. We have approximately 60 partners on our books, ranging from TVH contractors who take on residents in apprenticeship schemes to organisations such as Heathrow Academy which provide a wide range of employment opportunities at the nearby airport.

The partnerships also extend to local Job Centres, EU funded training and employment companies, and UK government-funded outfits. Some of these partners are tuned into the needs of the long-term unemployed and as such can provide the insightful support some residents need.

In summary, TVH attempts to address the root problems of unemployment with a view to the long term goal, which is to not only support people into work but also inject economic health into local communities.

“This approach works. Residents are not intimidated and understand that we are working in their best interests”

FIFTY FAMILIES

A survey of residents helped into work

In late 2013, TVH carried out a survey among 50 families who had been helped into work over the preceding 12 months.

With any programme like this our measure of success was not how many people gained jobs but how many were in sustained long-term employment.

We didn't just consider the objective evidence, we also attempted to gauge the more subjective and often overlooked measures such as improvements in health and self esteem.

Of the 50 families surveyed, 75.5 percent are still in employment 12 months later with more than half starting their employment since March 2013. This augurs well and reveals that once a position of employment is gained it is generally sustained.

Interestingly, there's an almost equal 50/50 split between those in full-time work and those in part-time work. This reflects the fact that many TVH residents have family commitments such as young children to look after.

This should also be viewed as a positive given that opportunities for part-time work, which dovetails with a parent's desire to look after their children, tend to be severely limited.

The majority of residents (78.1 percent) also expressed satisfaction with their salaries. 80.6 percent said they enjoyed their work, irrespective of whether it is part-time or full-time.

This is an important point. It's well known that long-term unemployment can have a deleterious effect on confidence and a gradual erosion of self esteem.

In practical terms this often translates into poor interview technique, and an unwillingness to draft CVs and application forms. It's often considered pointless and creates a sense of futility which can seep into other areas of life.

KEY NUMBERS

75.5% are in employment with more than half starting their employment since March 2013.

50/50 an almost equal split between those in full-time work and those in part-time work.

78.1% the majority of residents also expressed satisfaction with their salaries.

80.6% enjoy their work, irrespective of whether it is part-time or full-time.

46.9% of residents said their health had improved as a result of finding employment.

73.3% of residents said their quality of life had notably improved.

60% said their social life had also improved.

80% of the 25% who were no longer in employment said they were trying to find other work.

“Of the 25% who were no longer in employment it’s interesting to note that 80% said they were trying to find other work”

In fact, many TVH residents openly expressed these sentiments when initially approached about seeking work or training.

It’s not too surprising then that almost half of residents (46.9 percent) said their health had improved as a result of finding employment while 73.3 percent said their quality of life had notably improved. A further 60 percent said their social life had also improved. This in turn puts less pressure on hard pressed primary health care services and mental health teams and represents a real cost saving to the public purse.

Again, these are important points and reveal how employment actually helps people across a range of factors. These benefits also impact on the wider family and communities.

Of the 25% who were no longer in employment it’s interesting to note that 80 percent said they were trying to find other work.

We didn’t attempt to establish the reasons why residents were no longer in work, but based on our experience, the reasons range from short term contracts that have ended, to employers reducing their staff because of economic uncertainty.

However, it’s encouraging to note that from this group the support provided by TVH has provided a foundation for them to seek further opportunities.

Financial impact on rent arrears

Unemployment can and does cause financial difficulties. It’s not unusual to see the poor demonised as people point to the amounts of money coming out of the public purse as a reason to cut benefits even further.

However the reality, as opposed to the rhetoric, is vastly different. Whilst the overall benefits bill is high, people are only just surviving on incredibly low incomes and often have to rely on food banks or make choices about whether to ‘heat or eat’. People often get by through cutting back in other areas, which inevitably means arrears and debts stack up. And as a social housing provider we often bear the brunt of this, as unpaid rent becomes commonplace.

However, our training and employment work with 50 families had a dramatic impact. While rent arrears as a whole dropped only a few percentage points over the 12 month period, the arrears for the 50 families plunged by an eye-opening 43.48% over the same period.

“As a social housing provider we often bear the brunt of this, as unpaid rent becomes commonplace”

EXPLODING THE MYTHS ABOUT THE UNEMPLOYED

£566,000
 The average earned by **50 families** we supported into employment

81.3% of residents better off financially as a result of getting into employment. This:-

- ▶ benefits their families
- ▶ contributes to the local economy
- ▶ delivers taxes thereby boosting the national economy

75.5% of residents sustained employment for more than 6 months

73% reported improved quality of life as a result of getting into work

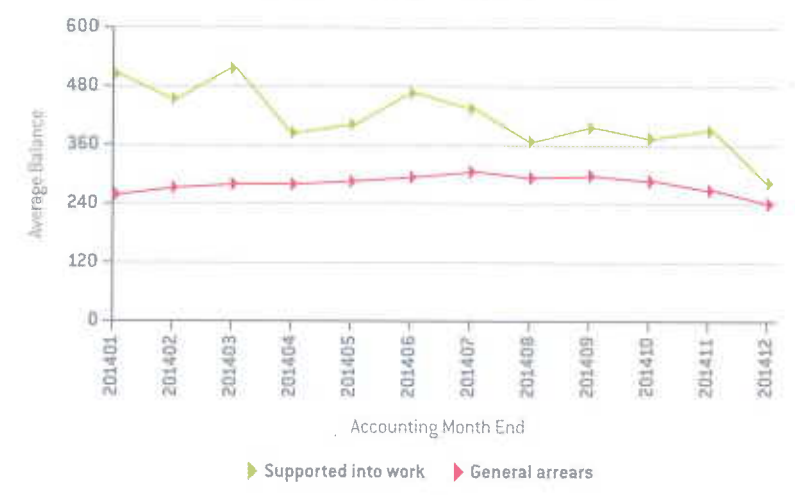
Over **60%** of residents reported:

- ▶ raised aspirations
- ▶ increased happiness
- ▶ increased motivation
- ▶ improved family morale

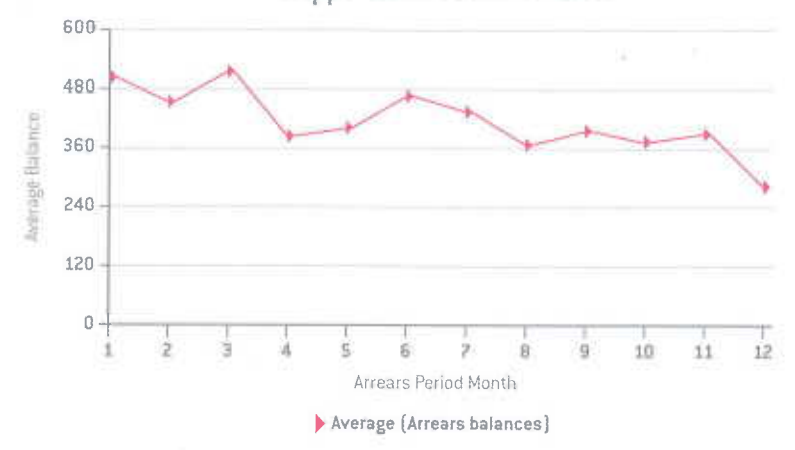
Over **60%** reported improved social lives as result

47% of residents reported health improvement as a result of getting back to work, saving the NHS money

Rent arrears for residents supported into work compared to general rent arrears



Impact on arrears when residents are supported to return to work



DRIVING THE PROJECT

Emildah Chabata

Residents' Training and Employment Manager

Emildah handles the day-to-day management of the training and employment programme, establishing and developing partnerships with employers and training organisations. She feels the immediate value of residents being in employment is their ability to pay their rent, thereby meeting one of TVH's fundamental objectives. The longer-term benefits are healthier communities and individuals who are putting something into society and who gain a greater sense of worth and value.

"You've got to look beyond the headlines. Some people have been out of work for a long time and their confidence is shattered. They've lost belief in themselves. We build relationships to help people overcome these hurdles."



"We build relationships to help people overcome these hurdles"



David Walker

Residents' Training and Employment Officer

To TVH residents David Walker is the face of its training and employment programme. As a front line worker, charged with bringing the programme to the attention of residents, he adopts many roles; mentor, advocate, confidante, employment advisor, counsellor, coordinator, and friend.

His approach is personal and one-to-one, designed to assess the individual needs of each resident and encourage, support and sometimes cajole them into taking a direction that will benefit them.

"It's a demanding role but one that is rewarding. Residents' needs vary widely. We have some people who haven't worked in years and you have to hold their hands and there are others who just need pointing in the right direction, who just need a little nudge and encouragement."