

TOP CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD AWARDED TO CRICKLEWOOD HOMELESS CONCERN

Thursday 21 March, 2013

Cricklewood Homeless Concern has become the latest organisation of its kind to achieve recognition for its customer service through the external verification of 'Putting the Customer First®' – The National Standard for Customer Service.

Adopted by over 20 different sectors, the Standard has been cited as a "must have" by a number of voluntary and community organisations using the framework as a way to build sustainable levels of customer service and secure new business. The robust framework explores organisational approaches to building customer relationships; cultivating market awareness; and developing people and sets out to support and drive continuous improvement across all levels of an organisation.

Cricklewood Homeless Concern, which facilitates individuals and communities through a range of specialist welfare and social programmes, is the first homeless agency to achieve putting the Customer First® status by awarding body, Customer First UK. The assessment included 19 members of the core team and 8 volunteers and took two days to verify.

Anne Hames, Assessor, reflects: "Cricklewood Homeless Concern is undoubtedly a beacon for innovation and is highly regarded by its wide range of customer groups, partners, referral agencies, staff and volunteer workforce. Underpinning its work is a consistency of approach, transparent and regularly updated policies and procedures which ensures that all customers receive a structured yet customer focused service that makes a real difference to people's lives"

As Funding cuts continue to make headlines within the Voluntary sector, organisations are encouraged to find creative and sustainable ways to develop and grow stability in an increasingly unstable environment. Often the only key differentiator will be the level of service provided; by measuring the effectiveness of internal (staff) and external (customer) relationships, Putting the Customer First® allows an organisation to verify its service against a government initiated Standard, something which appealed to CEO Danny Maher:

"We wanted to achieve a quality standard because we promote ourselves as a customer centric organisation but needed a recognised, external body to prove this, and they have!. We want to do all we can to make sure that the way we work and relate to our customers ensures they feel valued and treated as an equal. As Putting the Customer First® is all about an organisation's focus on its customers, the standard was in line with our aspirations.

As a result of our Customer First experience, our staff and volunteers now feel more positive and happy as the standard is evidence that they are top class people. The framework for achieving the standard was very useful and allowed us to make practical changes as a result to grow our service."

Customer First UK Chief Executive, Ted Stone says "Organisations who are achieving the Customer First Standard are sending clear messages to their customers that they put them at the heart of everything they do. We are proud to award Cricklewood Homeless Concern with the 'Putting the Customer First'® Standard and encourage any other organisation looking for a tool to drive their business forward and to establish a distinction in their service to contact us."

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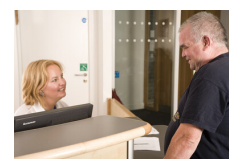
For further information please contact: Danny Maher CEO danny@chc-mail.org

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Us

Cricklewood Homeless Concern (CHC) (charity no 1097475) www.chc.org.uk was established in 1983 by local residents concerned about the then new phenomenon of street homelessness. During the early years the charity was run by volunteers. Today we employ 20 staff, and 32 volunteers, and we work proactively with statutory partners such as Brent PCT, Brent Council, DWP, and training providers but also now and of equal importance, our local community. We became a UK registered charity in 2002, registration no. 1097475. We opened a new community centre in 2008. For over 20 years CHC has been making a difference to vulnerable people by providing services that meet their housing /support needs. Today our client group has expanded to cover not only the homeless population but also any other vulnerable/disadvantaged group across London and of course our local community.

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Our main activities include a range of coordinated services under one roof, such as housing advice & support, drug and alcohol day treatment and training & employability programmes. We work closely with our local community to agree how we can together support vulnerable members of the community to fully integrate and become independent members of society.

About Customer First

The Customer First Standard was born out of a Government initiative to improve levels of service in the business services sector and is now recognised as The National Standard for Customer Service, its aim is to raise the quality of service delivery to customers by ensuring that organisations are assessed against, developed and supported to achieve the Customer First Standard.

Made up of 30 Statements, the Standard focuses on 3 key areas; Building Customer Relationships, Maximising Market Awareness and Developing your People. In order to achieve Customer First, an organisation must fully meet all 30 Statements and retains this compliant position for 2 years. The Standard has been achieved by hundreds of organisations in both the public and private sectors nationwide, both in the UK and Internationally. www.customerfirst.org

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