

Cheltenham Borough Homes

Cheltenham

Thousands of Cheltenham council tenants are getting an even better service from the people who maintain their homes, thanks to training from Gloucestershire College.

Forty operatives from Cheltenham Borough Homes' responsive repairs team, who maintain the council's housing stock, have been taught additional skills that help them resolve most problems in a single visit instead of triggering appointments with different specialists.

"When an operative arrives at a customer's home they are able to put a bath in, install the panel, put the skirting board back on and paint it – which means the customer doesn't have lots of separate visits from people who only carry out one part of the job," says Richard Prewer, Operations Manager for Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH).

"They ask us when we're available and then they fit in with us"

"We call it the right first time approach – and that means our customers benefit from an even more efficient maintenance service."

As satisfaction with the repairs team's service is already very high, this is quite an achievement.

Mr Prewer says Gloucestershire College's staff have played a major part in helping CBH to improve services because they're so flexible in the way they deliver training at a time and in a place that suits the team.

"They ask us when we're available and then they fit in with us," he says. "The assessors come to visit and sometimes have to find our operatives out on site wherever they are working. The training makes a massive difference and the college put in so much effort to make sure it is provided when and where we need it. We have 40 operatives here, who now hold formal qualifications. Everyone in the repair team holds at least Level 2 GNVQ and Construction Skills Certificates of Safety.

"At CBH, we have an ethos of continuous professional development, so we've enabled our staff to take NVQs in plumbing, carpentry and bricklaying to add to their existing skills. It's good for job security, staff certainly feel valued, and from their point of view, the training improves their opportunities for progression within the organisation."

The NVQ training is being complemented with European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) courses in partnership with Gloucestershire College.

The training enables staff to use technology more effectively which will further improve services for customers in the future.

"The college is so local to us and when they came in they were quite upfront about what they could offer. They don't make false promises and we know where we stand with them," adds Mr Prewer.

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