

Delivering a sustainable and positive impact on communities

Turning up the efficiency in heating systems replacement



Client	Somer Community Housing Trust
Services	Replacing old heating systems with more energy- and cost-efficient boilers
Contract start date	September 2009
Duration	5 years with a 2-year extension
Value	£1.5m a year

With energy efficiency becoming an increasingly important priority, the replacing of heating systems needed a speedy and transparent approach. Working in partnership with Somer Community Housing Trust, we implemented methods that have created cost savings and the chance to reach out and benefit the community.

In July 2009 we were awarded a contract to replace heating systems in 10,600 properties in the Bath area. The project was of top importance to Somer Community Housing Trust (CHT), so we knew we had to hit the ground running.

Work was due to start in September 2009, so we moved quickly to establish a transparent pilot programme. This allowed Somer CHT to observe our approach and be satisfied that our workmanship was of the right standard.

The pilot's scope included replacing two heating systems, plus follow-up site visits by both the delivery team and Somer CHT to make sure tenants were satisfied.

Somer CHT gave us resoundingly positive feedback and we set about rolling out the improvement works to the first tenant homes on schedule.

Moving quickly to engage tenants

First, we established the delivery team and worked closely with Somer CHT to appoint key members of staff. In any partnership, we know that personalities are important, so we selected people who would work together to deliver the highest standard of service to tenants.

The pilot had set the standard for work on the contract and this meant we were fully prepared to start work in September 2009. The majority of residents affected by the first heating replacements were elderly, so we made sure we paid particular care and attention to their needs.

We arranged open days to help tenants understand the scale of the works and how they would be affected. And we carried out full site inductions of any personnel involved so that we could be sure everyone shared the same level of understanding and awareness of our aims.

We are replacing heating systems within
10,600
properties in the Bath area



One of the residents of Mountain Wood – John Fleming – approached the partnership with an idea for a community garden. Somer CHT awarded him a Neighbourhood Impact Grant of £1,400 for materials and we got started.

Working together with tenants of Mountain Wood and students at Norton Radstock College, we designed a community garden with a range of possible planting schemes.

The garden, which is wheelchair friendly and accessible to everyone, boasts a patio area and four raised flower beds laid out in the shape of the Union Flag. The residents have now taken ownership and are growing a variety of flowers, plants, fruit bushes and vegetables.

In just the first quarter of the contract we've saved Somer Community Housing Trust almost

2%

of costs with more predicted for the second year

On time, on budget, on track

The heating installations are progressing on time and on budget – with both Somer CHT and tenants satisfied with the programme. The rest of the scheme focuses on replacing older, less efficient heating systems with newer, more energy- and cost-efficient boilers. These changes improve safety and will save tenants money on their heating bills.

And we are saving Somer CHT money: in the first quarter of the contract we showed a cost saving of almost 2 per cent, equivalent to about £2,500. These savings are based on us exceeding our pre-tender target savings. We also estimate that in the second year of the contract, we'll provide savings of almost 3 per cent a year for Somer CHT.

Best practice sharing in the pipeline

In the Somer CHT project, we've been able to share innovative best practice developed through other partnership contracts in the South West. We've been pioneering new methods of heating installation work – switching from copper piping (which fluctuates in price and is very labour intensive), to a plastic pipe product (which is more reliable and less prone to leaks).

Cultivating relationships of value

It's not just tenant heating systems in Somer CHT that we've been working to improve. We're also committed to benefiting the local community.

Great feedback all round

Tenant John Fleming said: "It's lovely to see people willing to volunteer to make our lives more pleasurable, as many residents can't get out and about. The garden will give us something attractive to look at and an outdoors space that's easy to maintain. The Trust, the Connaught staff and all the students have been marvellous. Their efforts are very much appreciated."

David Reynolds, Connaught Client Relationship Manager, is delighted with how quickly Somer CHT and Connaught have made a difference in the local area. He said: "Between us we have had a positive impact on the lives of tenants and we want this to continue over the life of the contract. With over 25 years' experience, we aim for the very best in customer service. Our liaison officers are always on hand to explain the improvement programme to tenants."

Neil Bolton, Director of Customer Services (Property) at Somer CHT, said: "We're early in the heating partnership with Connaught, but we're already seeing innovations. We are confident that our long-term partnership will deliver quantifiable benefits for our customers."

"The garden gives us something attractive to look at and an outdoor space that's easy to maintain."

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