

Wolverhampton Homes Builds Trust with Fierce

Background

In 2005, a large group of tenants in Wolverhampton, England voted to have their homes managed by an Arms Length Management Organization (ALMO)¹. As a result, **Wolverhampton Homes** was born. Along with the shift in management, came the drive to provide high-quality, low-cost services and improve housing conditions.

Challenges

In 2008, after three years in existence, an essential element was still missing: trust. While staff showed considerable potential and enthusiasm, lack of trust was evident at all levels—between direct reports and managers, managers and senior leaders, senior leaders and individual contributors as well as among colleagues.

"Past leadership development programs focused on following procedures—grievance procedures or disciplinary procedures—rather than on the behaviors and emotions causing issues," said Lesley Roberts, CEO of **Wolverhampton Homes**. "And, that's why they failed." Managers were reacting from a place of frustration rather than a place of respect. The goal was compliance, not understanding.

Lack of confidence meant employees were not forthcoming with information, open in collaboration or candid during confrontation. No shared language or tools existed; therefore, there was no common approach to problem solving or decision-making and no collective commitment to the future success of the organization.

Solutions

With a goal of transforming the culture, **Wolverhampton Homes** aligned senior management by taking them through full two-day **Fierce Conversations** workshops in cohort groups. Conversation models provided leaders with practical tools to conduct effective team-building, coaching, delegation and confrontation conversations with their 700+ employees in 10 locations across the city.

The in-house learning team at **Wolverhampton Homes** created a three-step sustainability process to boost learning transfer:

- 1) Ongoing communication reinforced key messages.
- 2) Language, tools and models were immediately applied through real-world problem-solving sessions.
- 3) Senior and junior leaders partnered for ongoing coaching and mentoring.



Wolverhampton Homes

Wolverhampton Homes is an **Arms Length Management Organization (ALMO)** managing 23,210 properties, including 1,932 leaseholds. Established in 2005, **Wolverhampton Homes** provides people-focused services and quality housing to more than 20% of all households in Wolverhampton as well as 5,000 garages and 270 shops

CHALLENGES

- Lack of Trust Among Workforce
- Procedural Rather Than Behavioral Training
- Lack of Individual and Organizational Confidence
- No Shared Language

SOLUTIONS

- Group Training for Senior Management
- **Fierce Conversations** Models: Team, Coaching, Delegation, and Confrontation
- Real-World Problem-Solving Sessions
- Ongoing Coaching and Mentoring

WHAT CHANGED?

- Progressed from Lowest to Highest Audit Ranking
- Improved Tenant Satisfaction
- Increased Candor
- More Engaged and Committed Workforce



“Fierce Conversations has made an amazing difference.

We now have a shared language and style of behavior which get the best out of our terrific workforce.”

— Leslie Roberts, CEO
Wolverhampton Homes

What Changed?

Wolverhampton Homes progressed from a 0-Star housing service with performance issues to an award-winning ALMO with the highest-possible ranking: 3 Stars. (Only 5% of social landlords achieve this level.) They have improved more than 16,000 homes and achieved success at national and local levels with 83% customer satisfaction. Staff engagement is on the rise, trust has increased and managers are more confident in themselves and others.

“**Fierce Conversations** has made an amazing difference,” said Roberts. “We now have a shared language and style of behavior which gets the best out of our terrific workforce. I am proud to say learning how to have **Fierce Conversations** has helped us attain 3 Stars with Excellent Prospects from the Audit Commission who recognized our strong leadership and massive cultural change.”

The inspirational team at **Wolverhampton Homes** continues to achieve goals, build customer satisfaction and develop cutting-edge services one conversation at a time.

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¹ Common in the UK, an ALMO is a not-for-profit organization that takes on the day-to-day management of properties, while the local authority retains ownership.