



## CASE STUDY | Beth Johnson Housing Group

### Housing group achieves goals through training

Beth Johnson Housing Group provides quality homes for rent and sale throughout Staffordshire, Shropshire and South Cheshire to meet a diverse range of housing needs. Through innovative new housing schemes and the regeneration of older properties, the Group has made a significant contribution to social housing and now manages over 4,400 properties.

The group employs over 200 staff, 120 of whom are office based. Beth Johnson Group's aim to provide a high quality range of services to its residents and the local community is achieved largely through the commitment of its employees.

#### ICT skills challenge

During 2003, following discussions with staff members, it was felt that enhanced ICT skills would contribute hugely towards improving the (already high) levels of customer service and efficiency.

Louise Cope, Head of ICT at Beth Johnson Housing Group agrees:

*"We felt that in raising the profile of ICT to staff, there would be more confidence using the various packages and jobs would be made easier - the 'knock-on' effect being improved efficiency and customer service"*

The management team hoped that through investment in good quality training, employees would exploit their knowledge and recognise how technology can help them in the day-to-day work environment.



#### Selecting the right training provider

Beth Johnson's management team conducted a rigorous selection process to find the right training provider. The MCW Group, a leading IT services company and education provider, was selected because of its experience in providing training for Housing Associations and because the company was able to offer the flexible, tailored courses that the Beth Johnson Group required.

Training was offered to all 120 office based staff, with a 95% take up. MCW worked closely with the Beth Johnson Group to establish individual requirements and courses were tailored according to existing capabilities.

The training encompassed the core Microsoft Office products: Word, Excel, Access, Outlook and PowerPoint. An assessment at the conclusion of the course was designed to confirm that the training had fulfilled its objective - that of helping staff to use the tools with greater confidence and competence. Successful completion of the course and the final assessment would also give employees the globally recognised MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist) certificate.

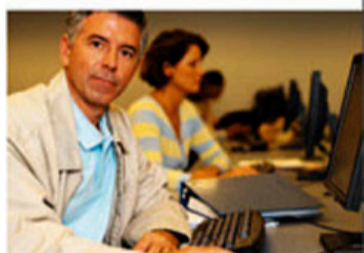
### "Very informative course set at the right pace for beginners."

#### Tailoring and delivering the program

From experience, the MCW Group recognised the need to create enthusiasm and belief in the project and ensured that participants were fully informed from the outset.

MCW delivered a short presentation to all course candidates explaining: the training program in detail; the benefits of gaining the MOS qualification; the methods used to group candidates by ability; the course structure and details about the assessment.

To minimise disruption, the training took place at Beth Johnson Group's head office. MCW was also closely involved in scheduling the courses to reduce the impact of the training on day-to-day service. Each staff member received two days training for each Microsoft application relevant to their job description. Classes were kept small, to ensure individual attention from the qualified Microsoft trainers.



#### Results exceed expectations

The training proved to be a resounding success; Beth Johnson Group now has more Microsoft certified employees than any other housing association in the UK. In September 2004, a special award was presented to the housing group by Microsoft in recognition of this achievement.

The outcome for the organisation is extremely positive staff members are more productive and are using the MS Office products competently to produce visibly improved documents and presentations.

*"The ultimate aim was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations," comments Louise Cope, Head of ICT of Beth Johnson "Investing in our employees in order to maximise the service we offer our tenants is vital."*

Richard Morris, Managing Director at MCW added

*"We were delighted to be asked to present an award from Microsoft to the Beth Johnson Housing group for the Microsoft Office Specialist Program for the year 2004. This was the first time a social housing organisation has won such a prestigious award. The team at Beth Johnson really recognises the value of investment in good training and a happy, efficient workforce"*

#### Delegate feedback

The delegates themselves had only positive comments to make about the training:

*"Thank you Paul (MCW trainer), I usually hate computer training but I really enjoyed this course, you are an excellent trainer"*

*"Steve (MCW trainer) made it very enjoyable and much easier than I thought it would be"*

*"I have learnt some useful tips to save me time in my job"*

*"Very informative course set at the right pace for beginners"*

*"Very pleased with the instructor. Did not rush through the tasks and explained in different ways when I did not understand"*



Beth Johnson Housing Group