

**Disruptive  
Innovators  
Network**

# **DIN** their words

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**Director of Business  
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**Futures Housing Group**

**A DIN visit to Octopus Energy cemented the trial of a new customer service approach at 10,700-home Futures Housing Group, which operates across the East Midlands.**



## What was the problem you needed/wanted to solve or the improvement you wanted to make?

### Helena:

Customer feedback is telling us that the way we communicate is really important. Where we do it well, it really drives customer satisfaction, and where we don't, it's a real driver for dissatisfaction. We've made small improvements in this area, but nothing that really pushed us forward.

In addition to what customers are telling us, it has been difficult to create the same culture in our contact centre, as the rest of the organisation.

A lot of the organisation works 37 and a half hours a week, and the working is really flexible, whereas the contact centre is led by demand - and you need to know people are in for our customers.

It had its own micro culture and we found that culture was driving some unwanted behaviours in the team.

We found it difficult for people in the contact centre to take accountability of each customer's journey because they don't know where it goes; it gets handed off to other people and just enters a process.

People also often start work in the contact centre and then move on to a specialised area of housing, so we started to think about how we get people who really want to stay working in customer service, but who want to progress in it and earn more money as well.



## What made you decide this was a priority to take on?

### Helena:

We'd talked before about how we could do something in a different way and be less traditional, so it was already on our radar.

Then our CEO and group director of people and change went on DIN's Octopus Energy visit - and doing things differently was already on their minds when they went along.

They both came back and said: "We can do this!"

### Darren:

One of the key things was that three of the five executive team members were already bought into the idea.

Tim, our CEO's mandate, was that he'd seen and wanted to try it and Helena said: "Let's get on with it!"



## How did you go about it?

### Helena:

Darren and I got our heads together and came up with the key principles of Octopus Energy's Customer Expert model - and adapted them for a housing organisation.

We decided to run it as a test and learn project and it was up and running two weeks later.

### Darren:

The idea was to set up a queue for queries coming in that were more complex and so we used our MS Dynamics CRM to move those queries into that queue.

Two people were chosen to be customer coordinators that would deal with that queue. We brought them in from the start and they helped us with the processes we needed.

Those two coordinators work from beginning to end with a customer, so they are never passed on to anyone else.

### Helena:

We shared the scope really early on with the management team at a meeting and did a presentation to get their buy-in.

We presented it very much as an opportunity and invited everyone to bring along a business challenge for customers that it could help solve. We wanted to know which cases would work best.

We knew it was going to involve change across the business and we wanted the right people with the right skills, to help us make that change.

We also weren't asking for any money and we were still going to be taking a volume of work.



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