



# DIN their words

## Steve Key

### Innovation Manager believe housing

**believe housing**, in the North East of England, was one of the first members of DIN and Steve Key appreciates the opportunities created by the network to develop our approach to innovation within social housing.

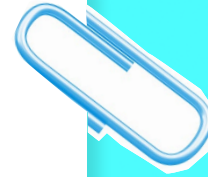
Through DIN, believe housing was given the chance to be supported by students from the Royal College of Art and thanks to that opportunity, the organisation has changed its approach to designing its services.



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

One of the problems we'd had was customers engaging with us over retrofit programmes. Even though we were doing things that made their homes energy efficient, they often saw it as negative and just didn't buy into it.

We'd had a lot of negative feedback and needed to understand it and try a different approach – and service design was an area we were already looking at.



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

We had an opportunity through DIN, to pitch for some service designers from the Royal College of Art, who were doing their PHDs at the time, to come and spend a period of time with us.

We picked the retrofit programme because we were struggling with tenant engagement; we really wanted to get them involved and get them to buy into the programme and understand the energy and environmental improvements we were making.

### **How did you go about it?**

We were really inspired to do this by our senior team and each of believe housing's directors has been really involved and got behind innovation and doing things differently.

One of the things that was great was that believe was the only housing association that was chosen by the Royal College of Art for students to work with, so that helped people feel it was special.

The students were so methodical in how they worked; it meant that our colleagues were really keen to work with them to develop a better experience for our customers.

The students weren't from the North East so they weren't invested from a local perspective and had no preconceptions and that made a real difference. They were with us for six months and they followed a service design methodology and process and didn't make any assumptions.

They took us through stages to get to an end result and it was all focused on the customer. If we told them what our customers thought, they said: "that's really interesting, we'll ask your customers directly and work with them to understand in more detail", so they went into it all with completely open minds.



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