

2009 Road Shows - Thinking Money



Evaluation Report

What took place in 2009?

The 2009 Road Show programme took place throughout the month of August and into early September during which time a total of 26 events were held. 21 of these events were in village locations such as Helperby, Topcliffe and Dalton compared to only 8 villages in 2008 with a further 5 events in our market towns of Bedale, Easingwold, Northallerton, Stokesley and Thirsk.

A number of other changes were made in our approach to build upon the efforts of previous years to ensure that we met as many of our customers as possible. These changes included:

- Adopting a theme called 'thinking money' with the aim of making sure customers were aware of the help they could access when experiencing financial problems.
- Producing an accompanying information leaflet highlighting the range of services available including those provided by Broadacres as well as those provided by other partner organisations.
- Sending out a personal letter of invitation to all of our customers living in the locations being visited. These letters were accompanied by a survey asking customers to give us their feedback on our Income Management Service and it is pleasing to note that over 30 customers are willing to work with us in more detail to further develop this service area.
- Involving staff from different departments within Broadacres and from differing levels within the organisation. Between 7 and 10 members of staff attended each roadshow, with a designated lead person at each event to co-ordinate.
- Inviting other organisations to take part including the Housing Benefits Team at Hambleton District Council and The Energy Saving Trust
- Carrying out a door step survey inviting customers to give us their views on a range of other issues such as whether or not Broadacres should invest in a mobile office
- Using a mobile trailer to help speed up the process of setting up and taking down information stands so that more locations could be visited.

(The image on the front cover is of a card given to staff at the roadshow held in Fostergate, Selby put together by some local children Georgia, Noah, Rachel and Ryan)

So was it value for money?

The total cost of the activity in 2009 was estimated to be just over £10,000 (including direct staffing costs to the Association but excluding postage/printing costs) whereas in 2008 the activity cost approximately £3852 (including direct staff costs) therefore we increased our costs by almost 260%.

However as we met with over 350 customers – not including children – compared to just 42 customers in 2008 this represents an increase in our contact of over 800%.

In addition we successfully recruited 137 new members for the Tenants Sounding Board as well as 71 new Local Monitors so we think we can give it a big thumbs up on the value for money front.

So what did customers tell us?

Customer Feedback

The range of responses obtained from the Door Step questionnaires is captured in the table below. Some of the other key themes which emerged as concerns for Broadacres customers included the quality of the Landscape Maintenance Survey, Access to Parking and Local Transport.

Area visited	Would pay by Direct Debit if it was available weekly	Requested information about opening a basic bank account	Requested a benefit assessment	Thought that Broadacres giving more information on saving energy was a good idea	Requested Energy Monitor	Had a pre payment meter in their home	Would like to be a Local Monitor	Would like to be on the Tenants Sounding Board	Thought overall Road shows were a good idea	Thought Broadacres should invest in a mobile office
Selby Area	2	0	2	13	16	11	10	12	27	20
Easingwold Area	0	5	2	11	13	2	7	14	34	22
Bedale Area	0	0	0	4	6	6	5	9	12	10
Thirsk Area	0		1	7	6	7	8	13	20	12
Stokesley Area	5	1	7	12	15	18	11	30	56	44
Richmondshire Area	1	0	1	5	10	7	5	11	16	11
Northallerton Town	7	4	4	12	14	20	11	14	27	12
Stokesley Town	6	0	3	9	9	22	7	18	29	26
Thirsk Town	1	2	5	5	10	12	2	9	37	14
Easingwold Town	0	0	1	4	8	5	3	3	18	4
Bedale Town	1	0	0	1	0	2	2	4	19	8
Totals	23	12	26	83	107	112	71	137	295	183

So what has happened with these issues since?

1. All of the new local monitors have now been contacted to thank them for agreeing to work with Broadacres and they will be visited individually over the course of the next few months by their Housing Officer to discuss any concerns in more detail. Sounding Board volunteers have also been contacted to ascertain which areas of policy they would most like to comment upon so that we don't send them information which isn't of interest.

As well as recruiting 208 new customers to our involvement processes we also managed to recruit a wider range of ages which is very much in line with our overall Corporate Action Plan. **33 of the 71 new local monitors are under 44 years of age (10 are under 30 years of age) and 52 of the 137 new sounding board members are under 44 years of age (19 are under 30 years of age).**

2. The issues that customers highlighted in relation to access to public transport have been fed into the consultation that is currently taking place in relation to NYCC's Local Transport Plan.
3. Customers that asked for additional help with financial issues have been contacted, below is a case study that outlines the difference that has been made to one of the customers as a result:

'A married couple in their 70's. Their income consists of State Retirement Pensions and occupational pensions. They also have some savings which they were dipping into regularly because their income was not enough to cover their outgoings. When we were out on the road show, a benefit check was requested. They were visited and it was suggested that Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit should be applied for. BHA assisted him with the application and they were awarded some Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit – which will reduce their rent and Council Tax payments by over 50%. A backdate of benefit was paid to BHA meaning that they are now in credit with their rent account.'

4. A meeting has been held with the Landscape Maintenance Contractor who has agreed to work with all the Local Monitors to seek their feedback on an ongoing basis.
5. All concerns relating to Anti-Social Behaviour have been reviewed by the Tenancy Relations Co-ordinator and dealt with accordingly. For example a specific project has been established at Fostergate, Selby to address concerns there and any individuals who reported concerns have been visited to discuss these in more detail.

So what did the staff taking part think about the events?

Feedback from staff who took part was very positive, for example one member of staff said;

'All the tenants I spoke to were happy to speak to us and appreciated the face to face contact. I really enjoyed helping out on the day and getting out and about to meet tenants and I would love to be involved again in the future.'

Another member of staff commented that;

'I felt that door knocking was more advantageous as people seemed to be really pleased that we had called. It was great that all sections were involved as this improved relationships with other teams. I found the road shows enjoyable apart from the rain when my hair was horrendous !!!.'

Overall staff members felt that the following points worked particularly well;

- Door knocking
- Having face to face contact to be able to listen and find out customers real issues,
- Going to customers directly as opposed to waiting for customers coming to offices (particularly those in rural locations),
- Having branded goods available to hand out to customers such as Broadacres pens and key rings
- Inter departmental team working

Areas for improvement/ suggestions for the future included;

- The trailer didn't seem to attract many customers at the majority of events, some staff felt this was due to its appearance and what was taking place within it– suggestion for the future: to put on more activities for customers to take part in centred on a focal point and look into alternative vehicle options.
- Timings of the road shows meant that some customers were not in when we called – suggestion for the future: to consider doing some of the events after 5.30pm and/or Saturday mornings in areas where large numbers of tenants are likely to be working during the day.
- Develop a calling card to leave at properties where no one was home to let them know that staff on the road show still visited them.
- Develop a separate pro forma to report repairs.
- Start the process for processing feedback from the beginning rather than wait until the end.

What about 2010?

What 2009 demonstrated was that our customers clearly value the road shows – particularly those who live in more isolated areas – and as a consequence our aim for 2010 should be to increase further still the number of locations we aim to visit. To achieve this we will need to develop a whole organisation approach to the Road Shows as it is only through the efforts of a wider group of staff that we will be able to achieve this.