

Welcome

We regularly hear you comment on how important people are in achieving positive and sustainable process change.

In this issue of the newsletter, we explore the 'people' aspect further, by considering how an individual's role might change as they progress through their career and what impact that can have on their approach to process improvement.

We talk first to Jane Keegan, Head of Responsive Maintenance and Internal Repairs at the Grand Union Housing Group in Northamptonshire, whose experience in Social Housing spans not only different sized organisations, but also different settings, from urban to rural.

Then Alix Poulton, Associate Director of Student Administration at Goldsmiths, University of London, shares with us her experience of transferring skills from one institution to another, following her recent move from the University of the Arts, London.

And finally, our spotlight falls on Mark Ricketts, now full-time Director of Process Improvement at the University of Bath, who we last spoke to when he was seconded part-time to that role from his previous position in Audit.

NEWSFLASH!

London, UK – December 2017
London Metropolitan University engage Processfix following organisational restructure.



Employee's drive improvement at Grand Union Housing Group



Grand Union Housing Group celebrate achieving 21st place on the 'Top 50 Landlords' list for 2017 published by 24 Housing magazine.

Jane Keegan is Head of Responsive Maintenance and Internal Repairs at the Grand Union Housing Group. Her journey in the social housing sector began whilst she was working in the NHS, where she helped a colleague find a role in social housing and then decided to apply for one herself! That role was at the Riverside Group, where she progressed to become Group Director of Repairs and Maintenance, before taking her current role at Grand Union. We spoke to Jane about her experience in the sector and what differences she noted between operating in large, compared to medium, sized organisations.

"Wherever I work, I am passionate about customer service. Regardless of where people live, if they pay rent, they deserve decent customer service. The closest business I would equate my role to is a logistics business; we are delivering a service."

"When I arrived as Head of Service at Grand Union, I had a blank piece of paper and was able to consider how best to bring together four areas. Having had experience of how Processfix can support change during my time at Riverside, I felt it was right to ask them into Grand Union. The

'Voids' process was our number one challenge. When someone hands in their keys, or walks out of the property, occasionally it is left in a poor state. Our challenge is to quickly turn the property round ready for the next tenant. We needed to reduce the time from 'Key to Key', which involves two processes: refitting the property and reletting the property. This happens hundreds of times per year, so the process needs to be as efficient as possible.

Jane went on to tell us that she didn't participate in the workshop herself, but preferred the staff to

take ownership. "I think one of the key features of the approach is that Processfix enables those who participate in the process to come up with the solution that will work not only for the organisation, but also for them individually. I believe in letting the staff determine the future."

"Processfix enables those who participate in the process to come up with the solution"

"I asked Terry Clark, who is a Manager across the group, to take on the role of Project Champion. Terry is a black belt in Six Sigma, so was familiar with a lot of the techniques that Processfix use and would be able to support the rest of the team through the workshop and beyond. Also, we didn't dictate who should attend, but went to the other Heads of Service to ask them to select people to participate. It was important to ensure that all areas were represented: housing management, allocations, maintenance and even those who receive the keys across the reception desk."

The two organisations, Riverside and Grand Union, differ in size, but Jane pointed out that both bring the same process challenges. Instead, it is the arena that is different: "Where I'm working now, it is very rural, thatched cottages and villages. That brings different challenges compared to urban and estate lettings. Over 250 square miles we have 3-4000 properties, that brings practical challenges (covering that area), rather than people challenges."

Continued on page 2...

Transforming the timetabling process at Goldsmiths, University of London

Alix Poulton is Associate Director of Student Administration at Goldsmiths, University of London. She moved to Goldsmiths in the summer, from the University of the Arts, London ("UAL"), where she earned the prestigious title of "Person attending the most Processfix workshops in Higher Education"!



"I first came across Processfix when I attended a Champions workshop at UAL where we established a priority list of challenges that we would take on over the next two years. These included: post-graduate admissions, student enrolment, scholarships and coursework assessment. I was involved in my role as Head of Academic Registry for the London College of Communication. We found that we got results quickly and were able to affect change across a challenging environment (six autonomous colleges across 16 sites in London)."

We asked Alix about the specific challenges she faced. "It was difficult to get a cross-section of staff to the workshops, but we managed this and ended

up with people representing their roles, rather than just their colleges, which was really positive. The workshops helped us to cut through a lot of red tape and helped us with a raft of change that we were undertaking as an organisation."

Having moved to Goldsmiths, Alix is working with Processfix again. "I have responsibility for leading quality assurance and registry services at Goldsmiths. Due to my background in process and business improvement, one of my key principal tasks was to establish a set of priority processes to be reviewed.

I have been working very closely with my Director on these process improvement areas.

Through conversation, we quickly realised we both had prior experience of Processfix, so he recommended that we have a conversation with them. We are both of the opinion that, whatever your skill base, bringing in Processfix can make big ticket items work better. In addition, a number of staff at Goldsmiths had been trained as Processfix facilitators, so were used to the language and approach."

The process that Goldsmiths decided to tackle first was timetabling. "This was an area where a lot of systems work had been done in the previous year, resulting in some improvements, but it hadn't resolved all of the issues and we still had a number of students who didn't receive their individual timetables on time. Internally, this has quite rightly generated a lot of focus and attention, which meant we could get the buy-in necessary to run this type of workshop."

"The workshop was unusual for us in two ways. Firstly, we included representation from the Students' Union and an individual student representative. This provided really useful insights: an eye-opener for the student to see what goes on behind the scenes and a powerful resource for the rest of the participants, who were able to hear first-hand the impact of incorrect timetabling. Having done the 'as is' part of the workshop, Processfix recommended that we start with a blank piece of paper, rather than looking to identify wastes. This resulted in a dramatic process improvement: we have simplified the process from 78

to a completely new 23 steps." Alix went on to stress another benefit of starting with the timetabling process: "We came out with six other processes that we needed to improve. Processes that impacted on the timetabling, such as: module selection, assessments, the timing of resits, and curriculum management."

Following the workshop, Alix has made sure that the senior management team is kept up to date with progress and they have endorsed the team to continue to use the Processfix approach on other processes that need attention.

"Some of the processes are small enough for us to use our internal colleagues who have had facilitator training. Others may require some external support. Goldsmiths has seen a big growth in numbers over the past five years and some processes need to be brought up to speed to cope with that changing environment."

"we have simplified the process from 78 to a completely new 23 steps"

"But the main benefit of the Processfix approach is that it encourages people to have a face-to-face connection. People are able to quickly build up their networks and relationships; that in itself is hugely beneficial to enable progress going forwards. I think that, although the workshop is a big commitment, anybody given the opportunity to engage in a workshop, should. The benefits beyond the process are extensive."

If you're interested in speaking to Alix about any of the above, please contact her via email: a.poulton@gold.ac.uk

...continued from page 1

The people challenges encountered, relate to the expansion of urban areas, such as Milton Keynes. New builds have taken up many of the good tradesmen, who understandably find it preferable, as they are building new houses, rather than dealing with tenants. That is probably short-sighted in terms of their long-term work, but unfortunately right now we have a staff shortage that puts pressure on the process."

Ultimately, Jane is clear that whatever size the organisation, it all comes down to the people.

"It is important that they have an appreciation for each other and what they do. A simple example of this, from Riverside, is of the person receiving the keys back from tenants: when they came in, the keys were just put in a plastic bag behind the desk, so when a contractor came to pick up a key, they couldn't always be found. The solution was simple: a key cupboard and labels. Just by having the people involved in the process in the same room, they were able to understand what was going on and work out together how to solve it."

Grand Union is not expecting instant results, but Jane knows

from experience how quickly things can turn around.

"right now we have a staff shortage that puts pressure on the process"

"At Riverside, my subsidiary had previously been the worst performing. We investigated what the best performing subsidiary was doing and could not see anything different. It had to be how we were doing things, not what we were doing. After a Processfix workshop looking at where we could improve our processes, we went from worst, to the best performing subsidiary, in a period of six months. So I'm looking forward to what will happen at Grand Union."

If you would like to speak with Jane about any of her experiences above, please contact her via jane.keegan@grandunionhousing.co.uk

In the spotlight: Mark Ricketts, Director of Process Improvement at the University of Bath

We last spoke to Mark in 2014, when he was seconded for a year from his role in Audit, to a new role as Director of Process Improvement. During his secondment, Mark worked with Processfix on a variety of processes. These showed how each team could work to break down some of the departmental boundaries and improve collaboration between Central Professional Services, the Faculties and School of Management. Following the positive momentum generated, a permanent position was established, which Mark took up in June 2015.



Back in 2014, we talked about effective process improvement being all about people. Now you're fully entrenched in process improvement, do you still think the same?

On the audit side, even though you're looking at risk management and controls, a lot comes down to people. It's the same with processes. You can get deep into a process map, but it is the people involved who make it work. If you get the key people in a room and provide them with a positive environment in which to think about what to they do, you will be surprised how much progress they can make and find a fresh way to do things. So yes, I still feel exactly the same: success is all about people.

What key changes have you made since becoming full-time Director of Process Improvement?

In April 2015, to build on the positive culture change we had already observed, we asked Processfix to train a group of facilitators. We had a group of twelve people interested, spanning all faculties and a number of professional services, so we underwent the four-day Processfix training and purchased a licence for the fixit simulation.

Following this, the facilitators teamed up to work on some university-wide processes. We found that this team approach was beneficial. Facilitating can

“We are becoming a community able to learn from each other”

be an exhausting job, so pairing up helped us to overcome the energy dips that many face during workshops. In terms of workshop participants, we followed the Processfix model of getting representatives from all the areas involved: the people doing the work on the ground who know the process inside out and senior managers to minimise any sense of displacement, or distrust that could arise if they were left out of the mix.

Quite quickly, we had a number of people engaged in process improvement and this has been successful across seven university-wide process areas and their follow-on projects.

Which of the areas has given you the most challenge and also the most tangible results?

Our post-graduate admissions process presented us with a mammoth challenge in terms of the scale and number of process steps. Of course, one of the benefits of running the workshops in-house is that participants don't have to travel long distances and you have a lot more flexibility with the timings.

A side project that we tackled was Guest Accommodation:

making profit out of facilities that are otherwise unused during the summer break. After one of the training sessions, I was asked whether or not we could include Guest Accommodation in our schedule of process improvement. Because the project already had momentum and the business case was already established, this was a really positive way to show tangible results in a short space of time.

How else have you expanded on the positive culture change?

The facilitators ran in-house training with more than 300 staff. We now have nine active facilitators and in March 2017 we started a network of project champions. By putting a call out to directors of service and heads of department, we were hoping to attract 50 to the network. We started with around 70; this is still growing and is currently above 80. Through that network, we are seeing real process change from the bottom-up.

We are becoming a community able to learn from each other in order to successfully implement change. Academic faculties, as well as professional services, are involved and we are encouraging people,

when taking on a review, to involve champions from other areas, in order to learn from each other and to learn together.

And what do you miss about audit, now you are fully engaged in Process Improvement?

What I really like about process improvement is that you are right in the middle of decisions being taken, rather than evaluating them afterwards. In terms of overall satisfaction for me, being able to help out areas that are contemplating change is really rewarding, rather than coming in at a later point, when change has happened and critiquing it – which is a different perspective.

“success is all about people”

But I do think many of the same principles still apply. I do miss the audit community, they have a challenging role to carry out, considering the organisational risks and adequacy of controls; something that I try to be mindful of as we facilitate process improvement.

If you're interested in speaking to Mark about any of the above, please contact him on: m.ricketts@bath.ac.uk.

About us

Organisations rely on processes to get things done. Often these simply evolve over time and become inefficient ways of working. Processfix bring powerful, proven and behaviour-changing techniques to bear in a professionally facilitated environment.

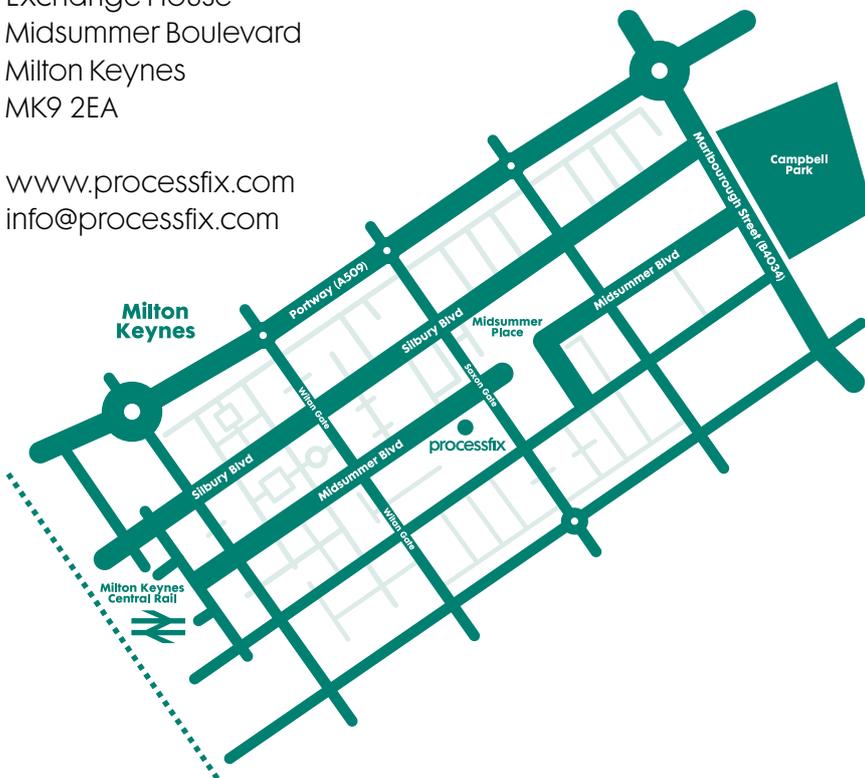
We focus on engaging your teams in their own improvement, empowering them to re-evaluate the way they do things and to develop new and improved ways of working that transform performance and deliver immediate results.

Whether you require Rapid Improvement Workshop facilitation, training, project leadership or an organisational wide process improvement programme. Processfix specialise in facilitating your team, delivering immediate benefits and instilling continuous improvement across your organisation.

If you would like to find out how Processfix can benefit your organisation, please contact us at:

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