

Consultant wins excellence prize

A CONSULTANT working with clients in the construction sector has won a top regional award.

Yvonne Castle, of Huddersfield based consultancy YCChange, won the excellence and quality category at the 2012 Committed to Construction in West Yorkshire Awards at the Royal Armouries.

YCChange worked with Derwentside Homes to undertake a comprehensive inspection of the whole of its business – including performance, service quality for customers, levels of staff motivation, benefits derived through partnership working and internal practices and measured them against best practice, highlighting gaps and weaknesses and actions required to make improvements.

The result was a hard-hitting report that gave the company a reality check on the quality of their services compared to the best in the country. Whilst performance was reasonable for a newly established company, it was evident that improvements could be made across all areas if the company was to be the top performing company its board and staff aspired to be.

Yvonne worked with managers and groups of staff to finalise an improvement plan containing clear actions, targets, timescales and identifying responsibility and accountability for its delivery. YCChange, based at Ainley Top, provided the role of “critical friend”



■ **HOME SERVICE:** Yvonne Castle (left), of YCChange, with Geraldine Wilcox, chief executive of Derwentside Homes, and David Anderson, sales and marketing director of Rixonway at the awards ceremony

throughout a 12-month implementation period, advising and mentoring managers in the delivery of improvements and challenging progress and quality. This ensured momentum was maintained and focus didn't drift away from the improvement plan.

Within 12 months the company delivered the improvements set out in the plan and greatly improved its performance across the whole of the company.

Derwentside Homes chief executive Geraldine Wilcox said the work carried out by YCChange was a key turning point for the company. “We needed that external reality check to show us our weaknesses so we could begin with support from Yvonne to develop an improvement plan that covered the whole business.

“Yvonne’s professionalism and patience was evident from the beginning and despite at times having to deliver a harsh message she made sure she acknowledged strengths and was supportive and encouraging of staff.

“She is highly regarded within the organisation as an expert in her field and no-one wanted to let their colleagues or Yvonne down by not delivering the improvements! We are indebted to Yvonne and her team for helping set the foundations for a high performing, efficient and most of all customer focused business.”

Derwentside Homes is listed among the North East’s fastest-growing companies and is in the national top 100 employers for apprenticeships. Its direct labour force was the first to be accredited by Housing Quality Network for value for money, quality work, efficient performance and customer satisfaction and the company is highlighted in Social Housing Today as the most “profitable” housing association in England”.