2012

Making the Case for Change: Preparing for the Rebranding and Relaunch of Access Community Trust

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Your **Community** Your **Trust**

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Introduction

St Johns Housing Trust has supported vulnerable individuals in Lowestoft since 1970, originally responding to homelessness among ex-fishermen. Over time, the Trust has evolved into a provider of **supported accommodation for socially excluded individuals**. However, the external environment has changed significantly, prompting the **Board of Trustees to take a strategic decision**: to rebrand and relaunch the organisation as **Access Community Trust** in 2013.

This transformation is not merely cosmetic. It reflects a broader mission to **support entire communities**, not just individuals, and to **diversify our services and funding streams** in response to declining government grants. As the report notes, "the pursuit of 'best value' has led to increased competitiveness within the marketplace," making it essential to "develop sustainable funding opportunities and be more in control of the organisation's future."

This report outlines the rationale for change and demonstrates how we are using **mainstream business practices and academic research** to guide our transformation.

Why Change?

External Drivers

- **Declining Government Grants**: Since 2008, public funding has shifted toward competitive commissioning, requiring measurable outcomes and added value.
- **Increased Competition**: Charities must now differentiate themselves to secure contracts.
- **Evolving Needs**: Social exclusion now encompasses health, employment and community disconnection.

Internal Drivers

- **Strategic Control**: We aim to proactively shape our future.
- **Service Expansion**: Our work already extends beyond accommodation.
- **Financial Resilience**: Diversifying income is essential for sustainability.

Our Vision for Access Community Trust

Our new charitable objective will be:

"To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those who are socially excluded, and assisting them to integrate into society."

This will be delivered through four strategic themes:

- **Accommodation**
- **Health**
- **Enrichment**
- **Employment**

Using Change Models to Guide Transformation

Why Organisational Change Models Matter

While the Trust is familiar with individual change models such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Sumerlin & Bundrick, 1996) and Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages of Change (1994), these are rooted in therapeutic contexts. As the report notes, "senior managers were confused about the business application of models that they perceived to be clinical." Therefore, we turned to organisational change models grounded in business theory.

1. Lewin's 3-Phase Model

Lewin's model—**Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze**—provided a foundational structure:

- **Unfreeze**: We conducted SWOT and PESTLE analyses to identify the need for change.
- **Change**: We introduced new strategies and behaviours aligned with our expanded mission.
- **Refreeze**: We began embedding these changes into our culture and systems.

As Akan (2008) notes, "non-profits seeking to strengthen their organisations or respond to changing needs can make gains by incorporating the Lewin model in a preplanning stage."

2. McKinsey 7S Framework

This model helped us assess internal alignment across seven elements:

- **Strategy**: We adopted a differentiation strategy.
- **Structure & Systems**: We reviewed decentralised service models.
- **Shared Values**: We used Johnson's Cultural Web (Mullins, 2005) to revisit our mission.
- **Style, Staff, Skills**: We evaluated leadership and staff capabilities.

While comprehensive, the model was "seen as overpowering to our underlying charitable aims and philosophies."

3. Kotter's 8-Step Model

Kotter's model became our primary framework due to its clarity and accessibility:

"Changing behaviour is less about giving people analysis to influence their thoughts than helping them to see a truth to influence their feelings" (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

This resonated with our values and helped staff engage with the process.

Implementation Planning and Activities

Staff Conference: Launching the Change

A two-day staff conference was central to our implementation strategy. It introduced Kotter's model and engaged staff in shaping the future of the organisation.

Conference Activity Plan (Aligned with Kotter's Steps)

Step	Activity
1. Establish Urgency	SWOT and PESTLE analysis of funding and policy environment.
2. Form a Guiding Coalition	Cross-functional teams including staff and former clients.
3. Create a Vision	Workshops to co-create new organisational and project-level visions.
4. Communicate the Vision	New communication channels and feedback loops.
5. Empower Action	Activities to redesign job roles and explore new brand values.
6. Generate Short-Term Wins	Innovation challenge with rewards (e.g., extra leave, vouchers).

Step	Activity
7. Consolidate Gains	Launch of "Change Champions" and ongoing project reviews.
8. Anchor New Approaches	Regular updates on impact and staff involvement in strategy.

As Kotter (1995) emphasised, "successful change begins when an organisation focuses on potential revenue drop, five-year trend in declining margins, and emerging markets that everyone seems to be ignoring"—all of which were relevant to our situation.

Making Change Stick: Sustaining Momentum

To ensure long-term success, we adopted Roberto & Levesque's (2005) framework:

1. Chartering

- Defined the purpose and scope of the change initiative.
- Used Belbin Team Roles to build effective teams.

2. Learning

- Piloted new ideas with client feedback.
- Used open forums and informal testing to refine approaches.

3. Mobilising

- Shared success stories and used former clients as ambassadors.
- Created emotional engagement through storytelling and symbolism.

4. Realigning

- Adjusted roles, reporting lines, and performance metrics.
- Planned annual staff conferences to review and recalibrate.

Conclusion

The rebranding of St Johns Housing Trust to Access Community Trust is a strategic, research-informed response to a rapidly changing environment. It reflects our commitment to supporting not just individuals, but entire communities facing social exclusion. By diversifying our services and funding streams, we are building a more resilient, inclusive and impactful organisation.

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