

The latest views from Alistair McIntosh, Chief Executive, Housing Quality Network

Top tips for scoring G1/V1 at your IDA

1 Start now

You can predict what the HCA will want to talk to you about. Are sales stalling? Is the cash running out? Has there been a board room bust up? No problem. Just set the facts out and agree a plan to sort it. Now. Don't wait for the call.



2 Make life easy for the HCA

The HCA teams put a lot of time into getting ready for these. But it's hard work going through thousands of pages of words and columns of numbers. Help them. You can do that by:

- Writing minutes that make sense to outsiders
- Producing well-argued reports with clear conclusions
- Giving them all the documents they need to get to grips with why you took a certain decision
- Making sure all your numbers, facts and figures match and link through all your different reports (and when they don't - explain why)
- Producing short briefing notes on any big issues you have had to deal with.

Stop to think before you hit the send button – read the papers. Plug any gaps.



The Housing Quality Network
Fast practical guidance on everything to do with housing.



The Neighbourhood Network
For everyone working in neighbourhood, tenancy and estate management.



The Excellence in Asset Management Network
Asset management, repairs and maintenance, and environmental issues.



The Excellence in Health and Safety Network
Promoting and supporting excellence in health and safety in the housing sector.



The Housing Finance Excellence Network
Supports excellence in financial and business management arrangements.



The Leasehold Excellence Network
Helps drive up service quality, performance and leaseholder satisfaction.



The Rent and Income Excellence Network
Help housing providers maximise income collection & minimise arrears.



The Residents' Network
The best place to keep up to date with co-regulation.



The Strategic Excellence Network
A resource for everyone with an interest in policy and strategy.

3 Study the form book

There will always be hot topics. Just now the HCA is talking about things like:

- How you will manage the voluntary Right to Buy
- How you will cope with a possible downturn in sales
- Ensuring that you know enough about what it will cost to repair your homes
- Making sure you are working towards the national house building targets (and not hoarding cash)
- Value for money.

4 Watch out for the worst case scenario

Yes they will look at your stress testing. Get ready to answer questions about:

- Surviving a longer rent cut
- Pressure on welfare reform slashing your collection rates
- How you group the stresses (some RPs have fanciful notions about sales booming and cheap finance coming in to magically rescue the business plan at pinch points – the HCA will spot this)
- How realistic your mitigations are (don't dismiss merger out of hand).

5 Practice makes perfect

It's no secret what the HCA does when they come to visit. They will:

- Interview the chair and chairs of audit and development
- Interview senior executives
- Observe a board meeting.

Why don't you run a few practice interviews? You can easily work out what the HCA will want to talk about. It will be about the risks you face and the effectiveness of your strategy. We are not saying that you should be automatons. The HCA knows that boards can disagree. That is healthy. But do make sure that facts of the matter are right. And you get top marks when you can show that the board has put in a few good challenges to the executive. That's your job.