



PUBLIC HOUSING SUPPLEMENT 2008

Knowledge

THE LOCAL INSIGHT MAGAZINE FROM CIVICA

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1 WELCOME

Welcome to this Public Knowledge, Housing special.

With the high cost of housing, the credit crunch affecting buyers' purchasing power and the pressure for affordable homes, there is increasing demand on social housing and on housing providers.

At the same time, we have seen the public sector become increasingly challenged to deliver new services in the manner of private sector providers and achieve better overall quality.

When seeking to increase the standard of customer care and reduce costs, it is important for housing associations to evaluate the strategic relationship they have with their IT suppliers, working together to envisage the required outcome for the business before looking at what IT solutions are available.

Mobile working is enabling housing associations to be more proactive and accessible. Glasgow is an example where visiting officers use handheld PDAs to record and respond to questions relating to rent and repairs.

Affinity Sutton is another example of a housing association that uses IT as an enabler to support its tenants' needs. If a resident calls the housing association to query a bill or needs a new wheelie bin, they speak to one point of contact only, making the process hassle free and more effective, and enabling the progress and outcome of queries to be tracked.

This is a time of growth and development for housing associations and an exciting time for us, working with them to deliver effective strategies supported by expert business process re-engineering and technology systems.



John Hood, Managing Director,
Housing & Asset Management



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City Building (Glasgow) selects Servitor for housing repairs



Civica has signed a three-year £650,000 contract with City Building (Glasgow) LLP to provide its Servitor housing repair system, which will help enhance the administration of 110,000 homes in Glasgow.

Servitor will replace City Building's existing housing repair system and enable the association's mobile workforce of some 2,000 plumbers, builders, joiners and suppliers to enter repairs and maintenance information and to progress reports remotely on the system using mobile devices. Servitor will also send scheduled alerts to the relevant workforce team when a property is due for a maintenance visit, ensuring that service level agreement targets are met.

City Building (Glasgow) LLP evolved from the former Building Services Department of Glasgow City Council. The company completes over half a million repairs every year.

John Foley, Finance Director, City Building said: "Civica's Servitor housing repairs management system is a major investment for us in the future development of our organisation. It will provide us with the right technological infrastructure needed to drive us forward, while maintaining the excellent levels of customer service that our customers have come to expect.

"We chose to go with Civica because of its high level of knowledge of the social housing sector, its delivery of administrative process improvements and in-depth technical expertise and support."

Social Housing sector invests £1million with Civica

Civica signs agreements with A2 Dominion, Three Rivers and Meres & Mosses housing groups and building services firm Jackson Lloyd, worth more than £1million.



Three Rivers housing association has chosen to adopt Civica's modern front and back office systems including contact management, housing administration and mobile working to streamline operations for the newly transferred housing stock from Berwick-Upon-Tweed Borough Council, before upgrading Three Rivers' own customer service operation.



A2 Dominion housing group has a stock of over 32,000 houses, following the merger of A2 and Dominion housing associations. A2 Dominion will benefit from integrated contact management and housing administration to provide superior customer service to tenants, ensuring 75% of all telephone calls can be resolved first time. Universal Housing will be used to align back office operations across A2 and Dominion.



JACKSON LLOYD Jackson Lloyd provides planned and responsive building maintenance services to over 20 RSLs and local authorities in the North West. Civica's Servitor, an integrated repairs and maintenance system, including automated workforce scheduling and mobile working will help Jackson Lloyd to increase the number of daily maintenance jobs that can be handled.



Meres & Mosses, part of the Shropshire Housing Group formed to deliver new affordable homes and first class services across Shropshire, will implement Civica's Universal housing management system, helping to address post-merger integration issues by streamlining allocation and repair processes.

Meanwhile, Total Response Ltd, which provides maintenance, repairs and other property services to all members of the group, has also chosen to adopt Civica's mobile working solution.

3 HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Hackney Homes invests in IT solutions for contact centre, online services, workflow, mobile and home working to deliver a cutting edge service to tenants and improve the working environment for the Hackney Homes team.



Hackney Homes looks to performance improvement

Hackney Homes, an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) commissioned by Hackney Council, is to overhaul its entire IT operation following a shared risk and reward £1.9million agreement with Civica. Through its Universal Housing and Servitor solutions, Civica will deliver new contact centre software, online services, workflow systems, mobile working and home working facilities that will transform Hackney Homes' approach to resident services over the next two years.

By agreeing a shared risk and reward approach, Civica is committed to work with Hackney Homes to ensure that the implemented changes deliver measurable improvements in service delivery and efficiency. Along with improved customer satisfaction scores, success will be measured by improvements in Hackney Homes Audit Commission star rating.

The incumbent systems will be replaced with:

- New contact centre systems to instantly identify callers and access all information from a central database, allowing one agent to resolve any resident enquiry during the first call
- New online services, that will automate processes such as maintenance requests and rent balance enquiries

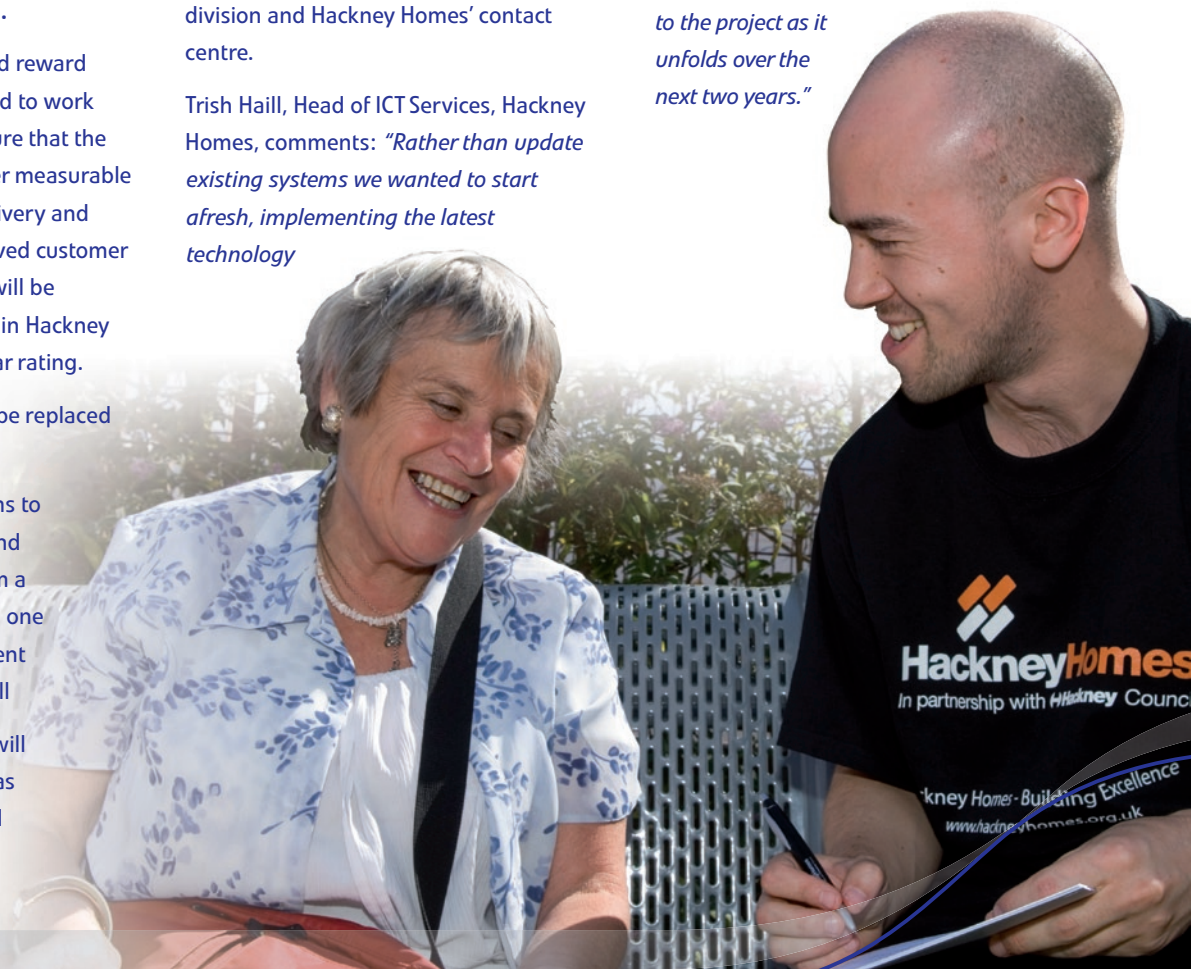
- New analytical software to help tailor services to tenants and leaseholders; workflow software to enhance staff performance and ensure services are consistently provided to all customers
- Mobile working systems for property repair teams; home working infrastructure for all workers
- Anti-social behaviour solutions to track incidents across Hackney Homes' properties.

The first phase of the two-year project is due to be completed in September 2008, incorporating the anti-social behaviour division and Hackney Homes' contact centre.

Trish Hail, Head of ICT Services, Hackney Homes, comments: "Rather than update existing systems we wanted to start afresh, implementing the latest technology

to deliver a cutting-edge service to tenants and improved working environment for the Hackney Homes team. This partnership with Civica has already delivered far more than software and services; their input on the strategic direction of Hackney Homes has proved invaluable."

John Hood, Managing Director, Housing, Civica comments: "As housing organisations are under increasing pressure to deliver outstanding customer service to tenants, Hackney Homes has seized the challenge with gusto to introduce an outstanding array of tenant-based services. We are looking forward to the project as it unfolds over the next two years."



4 MERGERS

Following the merger of two housing groups, Affinity Sutton adopts a strategic approach to achieving efficiencies, saving money and enhancing customer experience at the same time.



How Affinity Sutton deliver exceptional **customer service** in a highly competitive housing market

The UK market continues to put housing associations under significant pressure to become efficient. Only those perceived by the Audit Commission and their clients to be successful are eligible for additional funding. Without it, it is harder to deliver the best service to tenants.

Housing Group, Affinity Sutton, was created through the successful merger of the William Sutton Group and The Affinity Homes Group in 2006. The Group has eight operating companies including Broomleigh Housing Association and Downland Housing Association.

Mike Yarde, ITU Director, Affinity Sutton comments: *"Throughout the process of various mergers and acquisitions our main goal has been to standardise IT systems rather than complicate matters by introducing new ones. The pressure to deliver*

outstanding service, coupled with a fight for funding, has left us with a need to be efficient while giving tenants an unparalleled level of service."

The suggested approach was to deploy a contact centre solution and EDM/Workflow system to ensure effective communication between departments.

"The results are exactly what we needed and the contact centre currently handles 23,000 calls a month. Previously each operative in our contact centre would work on an individual level, unable to have one simple of view of a tenant's interaction with other departments and whether there are any other outstanding queries to be dealt with."

Says Yarde: *"From a caller perspective, there is a lot less frustration as there is no need to have various personal details to hand; they are also able to talk to one person about anything, rather than simply being put on hold or passed to another operative. The experience is now a far more consistent and streamlined one."*

"From Affinity Sutton's point of view, we can identify callers easily, and address any queries from that caller during the same call. We now aim to answer 85% of all calls within 15 seconds and can now resolve 75% of calls first time, without the need for follow up. If needed, an enquiry entered into the system following a call is tagged with a required response time and automatically escalated if it isn't dealt with."

"Specifically among Broomleigh residents, customer satisfaction levels increased by 3.6% in 2007 and we can also score our advisors on their performance when handling a call, ensuring consistent delivery of service."

Yarde concludes: *"We've already turned our attention to mobile working. We're now looking to empower our housing officers to deal with a multitude of issues via PDAs linked directly to our central server. Once Civica has deployed this system, housing officers will no longer need to plan in advance when visiting a scheme, instead accessing all relevant information directly from a handheld device. At the same time they will also be able to identify if there are any other outstanding actions to be undertaken on site. If a repair is needed, the housing officer can take photos and email them back to the relevant department, so that the issue can be identified more quickly and dealt with."*

Affinity Sutton's goal was never primarily to save money, instead the group is far more focused on offering an impeccable service to customers. In a highly competitive market, Affinity Sutton has managed to streamline interaction with customers, save money and enhance experience at the same time; a great achievement.



"Customer satisfaction levels increased by 3.6% in 2007"

Mike Yarde, ITU Director, Affinity Sutton

5 HOUSING REPAIRS

Maidenhead and District Housing Association (MDHA) has significantly increased efficiency and productivity and now offers even greater customer satisfaction by introducing Civica's Servitor housing repairs solution.



20% increase in productivity for Maidenhead and District Housing Association

MDHA is the largest subsidiary of the Housing Solutions Group, responsible for 3,700 homes. In January 2004 it started using Servitor to control its responsive repair work and a year later extended the system with Servitor's mobile technology.

The MDHA call centre uses Servitor to log calls, allocate work to repair operatives and confirm the appointment with the tenant - all during one telephone call. This saves time and avoids frustrating delays for the tenant.

Using mobile working, the Planner can follow appointments live on screen and ensure that they are kept. Repair operatives log the times of their arrival on site and when they finish the job, and send the information back to base using mobile handhelds. This enables MDHA to reshuffle the appointments diary if jobs are completed earlier than anticipated.

The system quickly produced a 20% boost in productivity. Servitor also applies all the costs directly to the repair jobs, which provides transparency on all savings.

John Barnes, Operations Manager of MDHA says, "We were previously using hard copy job tickets and a diary, but had no real system in place. We wanted software that would show us how much each repair job costs, and we also wanted to introduce appointment scheduling. Servitor offered us everything we needed and we haven't been disappointed."

Customers too have seen a big difference, Barnes adds. "Before Servitor was introduced the time needed to complete a repair was around 14 days, but gradually that has been cut down to eight and a half days. Feedback from tenants is very good, over 90% of tenants are given an appointment time on their first call."

Another benefit is that we now have a real-time view of costs. "Before, we had to wait for an operative to hand in a paper ticket, which then sat in a pile to be processed," Barnes says. "Now we do a job one minute, and we know the labour value on that job straight away."

MDHA is working with Civica to implement automatic data transfer from materials suppliers as well, and once that is in place, bills for jobs can be produced straight away. This will cut another layer of administration and free up more resources for customer focused roles.



6 HOUSING

St Leger Homes of Doncaster predicts savings of £20,000 per year as well as improving arrears collection with Civica Mobile.



St Leger Homes supports tenants with **mobile working**

Staff dealing with rent arrears at St Leger Homes of Doncaster have begun to use Civica Mobile linked to back office housing management systems to access and update information such as account balances, transaction details, benefit entitlement and repayment agreements during appointments with tenants in their homes.

"The real strength of the system is that officers are able to access up-to-date, real-time information from the back-office system," says Martin Musgrave, Chief Executive of St Leger Homes – an Arms Length Management Organisation created by Doncaster Council in October 2005 that manages just over 21,000 council homes.

"They are also able to update accounts. As they enter data into the PDA, it is immediately updated in the back office system," he adds.

Ordinarily, officers must visit the office before and following visits, to synchronise new data with office systems. Now, mobile staff are able to access payment information as current as that morning's cash office figures without the need to come into the office, saving time and travel costs.

Additionally, St Leger Homes' staff no longer need to carry paper documents or risk taking the wrong information with them. Instead, officers are provided with a small bluetooth printer for printing statements and a digital pen enabling tenants to sign documents on screen.

The technology works around the common problem of an unreliable or lacking indoor mobile signal, as users can download the data they need before going into the tenant's home. They are then able to work offline and, when the signal returns, the PDA automatically synchronises any entries made.

The system supports improved customer service and debt management – new payment agreements can be established on the spot and officers can visit tenants without appointments if opportunities arise. Overall, this increases the likelihood of arrears resolution and makes best use of officers' valuable time.

Steve Taylor, Special Project Consultant at Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council predicts the system could save St Leger Homes' arrears operation in the order of £20,000 per year as well as improving arrears collection. The extended use of the solution to cover areas such as Estate Management is also being considered and it is anticipated additional annual efficiency savings will result.

"The aim is to provide a Mobile Working solution for Social Landlords covering all disciplines through a single system," says Erika O'Brien, Account Manager at Civica.

"Many of the available packages tend to cover just one area, such as DLO or stock condition surveys. Civica Mobile has been designed to meet all of our customers' needs, avoiding a situation where multiple systems need to be maintained to support different departmental requirements."

The capacity to tailor services to the tenant is proving extremely useful, too. *"If we need to report a repair, we can capture that,"* added Martin. *"We have recently collected personal information from tenants, for example, details of preferred languages or mobility difficulties",* he continues. *This is available to staff using the Mobile Solution, ensuring we provide a more inclusive service."*

"The aim is to provide a Mobile Working solution for Social Landlords covering all disciplines through a single system"



7 PUBLIC PROTECTION

Anti-social behaviour reporting continues service transformation and opens up multi-agency action for North West housing provider, Golden Gates Housing.



Golden Gates Housing targets anti-social behaviour

Golden Gates Housing, a three-star Audit Commission-rated social housing provider in Warrington, is planning highly targeted campaigns against anti-social behaviour through a three year investment in Civica's Public Protection software. The Public Protection reporting software – implementation work on which is due for completion later this year – provides scope for co-ordinated multi-agency action on particular issues.

Using the Civica Public Protection platform, Golden Gates' tenant support teams will be able to record and respond quickly to any anti-social behaviour incidents affecting the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)'s 8,900 tenants housed across the borough. The software also enables incident records to be opened to third parties' computer systems such as police, solicitors and housing associations, whether for co-ordinated action on particular cases or as part of a multi-agency shared services delivery model for operating efficiencies.

The new Civica Public Protection platform, which can be integrated with the ALMO's existing housing management software and front line customer service teams, helps local service teams to quickly and accurately log incidents, ranging from egg throwing to more serious occurrences such as damaged windows. The software also enables teams to track and analyse incident 'hot spots'.

Using the product's workflow modules, the teams have clearer schedules for addressing incidents and through the integration with contact management systems, improve communication and reassurance to tenants during the incident response process. Golden Gates Housing is also working with the town's Community Safety team and a solicitors' firm in Liverpool to share the software and offer a joined up response for tenants.

Golden Gates, which was spun off from Warrington Borough Council in 2004, has earned a strong reputation for customer service following its Business Transformation programme over the last three years. The ALMO's anti-social behaviour initiative follows the transformation programme which improved system efficiency, increased tenant support, care in their homes and increased mobile working and productivity. Following this phased service transformation, the Audit Commission awarded the social housing provider three stars following its latest inspection.

Peter Fitzhenry, Assistant Director of Housing at Golden Gates Housing, says: "We are striving to transform our service to tenants and Civica Public Protection enables us to record and categorise different incidents for action better than before. The capability for targeted action on any unpleasant incidents is of great reassurance, particularly to older customers.

"Our staff find the system very easy to use and the system is flexible enough to be connected with our contact management teams. Most excitingly of all, it can be opened up to end point computers at other nominated bodies like solicitors and the police."



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