

## **Hounslow Homes Integrates CRM and Back Office to Deliver Improved Customer Service**

Hounslow Homes has become the first UK housing organisation to deeply integrate CRM technology with its back office systems. The new integrated solution allows customer service advisors to search customers' full case histories, refer enquiries, complete customer paperwork and schedule appointments and follow-up calls, thus enabling the delivery of a more streamlined and better quality service. Customers will no longer have to fully repeat their previous enquiries.

Since its formation in 2002, the ALMO has focused on improving customer satisfaction, putting the provision of excellent customer services at the heart of its strategic vision. A major programme of long-term investment in information technology was therefore developed and implemented in order to make this vision a reality, with the ongoing programme managed by independent IT and business consultancy NCC Group.

The first phase of the programme involved the upgrading and deployment of a repairs scheduling system to streamline the repairs process by allowing staff to book immediate repairs appointments, and the introduction of a CRM system which would enable an even more efficient and effective service to customers. Following introduction of both systems, the percentage of repairs jobs for which an appointment was made and kept increased significantly to 99.6% and customer satisfaction increased from 67% to 80%. These improvements were noted as a significant factor in Hounslow Homes becoming the first ALMO to be awarded the maximum three star government rating for excellent services in May 2005, following its Best Value Inspection.

The latest phase of the programme has seen the launch of a new Customer Services Centre, which exploits these technologies to offer customers a choice of how they communicate with Hounslow Homes, simplifying the options and promoting social inclusion within a culturally diverse area. The new contact centre merges the existing general enquiries call centre and repairs and appointments service and allows customers to call in using one free phone number Monday to Saturday. Recently, a new facility for customers to report and track repairs securely via the Hounslow Homes web site was introduced. Customers can also continue to visit the area offices in person, or via e-mail.

Fundamental to the new service offering was the integration of the Lagan CRM and Anite housing management systems, together with further back office systems, the Xmbrace Opti-time appointment management

system and the Civica Servitor job costing application. The process utilises adapter software to provide sophisticated two-way interchange of data between the front and back office systems.

Lynne Bann, Head of Customer Service Centre at Hounslow Homes comments “We have completely transformed the way that we deal with our customers and now focus on how and when our customers want to communicate rather than asking them to fit in with what suits us. The success of this complex project has been achieved thorough a combination of hard work and commitment to our strategic vision by both Hounslow Homes’ staff and our technology partners, and project management support from NCC Group.”

Bob Unsworth, project manager for the Local Government Integration Practice (LGIP) comments “Hounslow Homes has without doubt taken the lead in the social housing sector on delivering business benefits from its use of CRM. Previous CRM implementations have too often focussed on delivering technically viable solutions without considering how the solution can improve service delivery and demonstrate real improvement to customers.”

The programme of investment in IT to deliver further customer services improvements is ongoing, with NCC Group continuing to provide independent consultancy support.

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## **Notes to editors:**

### **Hounslow Homes**

Hounslow Homes manages over 16,000 homes on behalf of the London Borough of Hounslow. Further information can be found at [www.hounslowhomes.co.uk](http://www.hounslowhomes.co.uk).

- Hounslow Homes was formed in 2002 as one of the first arms length management organisations (ALMOs) in the country. Hounslow Homes is tasked with managing the council's 16,500 homes and has delivered £120 million of refurbishment and improvement works to bring its housing stock up to the government's 'decent homes' standard by 2006.
- 13,500 properties have been improved with new kitchens, bathrooms, roofing modernisations and new windows. Hounslow Homes completed all decency work by 2006, four years ahead of the government's deadline. An ongoing programme continues to maintain properties to this standard.
- The ALMO was awarded the highest three-star rating by the Audit Commission for excellent housing services in 2005.
- Services to residents include a free phone number and service, caretaking and ground maintenance.
- Hounslow Homes also provides a dedicated anti-social behaviour team to provide advice and support to residents.

### **NCC Group**

NCC Group is a leading independent provider of consultancy and testing services to the housing sector with experience going back over 20 years. With over 250 existing housing sector clients, we specialise in ensuring their business is supported by robust ICT aligned to the business, which is efficient, secure and demonstrates value for money. Further information can be found at [www.nccgroup.com](http://www.nccgroup.com).

### **LGIP**

The Local Government Integration Practice's objective is to eliminate "integration" as an obstacle to achieving joined-up local government services. LGIP facilitates collaboration between suppliers and their local authority customers, to deliver integration capabilities that would otherwise not be achievable, or would be significantly more expensive where each supplier developed the capabilities individually. Local authorities are not charged to participate in LGIP - the scheme is funded through supplier subscription.

LGIP is the only open forum where competing suppliers can collaborate to improve cross-product integration in areas that benefit local government, without exposing the suppliers to loss of competitive advantage. By including local government participation, the process remains open and transparent.

The Integration Practice delivers its capabilities primarily via:

- Communities of Practice (CoP): Each CoP provides a product-neutral forum that focuses on integration requirements within a service domain. By combining local authorities' business knowledge with their suppliers' expertise and technical skills, LGIP enables suppliers and their customers to reach agreement on integration solutions.
- The LGIP web site: Extends the esd-suppliers web site ([www.esd-suppliers.org](http://www.esd-suppliers.org)) to provide the 'social fabric' for LGIP. The local government community accesses the LGIP site via esd-toolkit ([www.esd-toolkit.org](http://www.esd-toolkit.org)).