

Mail is money

“The Gandlake solution saves us money and at the same time increases customer satisfaction. This is exactly the sort of innovative thinking we look for from our IT suppliers”

Jeremy Marshall, Project Manager, Arvato Government Services (Sefton) Ltd

The benefits team at Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council has been instrumental in saving money without having to impact on customer satisfaction. In fact, one of the cost saving exercises has made the lives of local benefit claimants a great deal easier.

The rising number of benefit claims means an increasing amount of communication for the council. When it comes to year-end billing, the majority of benefit letters have to be mailed at the same time as council tax bills, to the same address, but not in the same envelope. The complexity of the average back-office system, the separately produced print runs which are too expensive to combine manually, and the lack of available suppliers capable of offering a cost effective solution, means most councils have no choice but to spread the documents across more than one envelope.

The time frame between the two mailing runs often means bills and letters land on doormats on different days. As a consequence, this generates a large volume of unnecessary customer service calls, visits to council offices and additional incoming written communication, many of which just require a simple clarification response.

The revenues and benefits service at Sefton Metropolitan Borough

Benefit investigates how Sefton have saved money and improved customer satisfaction in benefits delivery

Council is managed by Arvato, and both parties were keen to improve the service. Typically, due to the complexity of the project they struggled to find a supplier able to offer the service.

Sefton and Arvato then approached Gandlake, who through an off the shelf system managed to tackle the issue by quickly merging the two print streams together so that the recipient receives all the necessary information in one envelope.

The system has immediately saved them 90% of their postage and envelope costs and the same process can be applied each year from now on achieving the same year on year saving.

It has also raised the standard of customer communication making



the information much easier to understand. Receiving the two documents at the same time removes confusion and significantly reduces unnecessary contact from the customer, freeing up time for the staff to focus their efforts on those who require more attention. This reduced amount of customer contact ties in nicely with the National Indicator for avoidable contact – NI14.

In addition to annual billing, this same functionality can be used for daily Council Tax bills and benefit letters, as well as mailings from all departments across the council. This results in even greater savings, and further enhances the image of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.

In summary, the whole communication process is much slicker, costs are reduced and the perception of the council is heightened. Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council used the Gandlake solution to design its outgoing annual billing documents and to condense them into a single mailing for annual billing 2009/10.

THE SCALE OF THE SAVINGS

Objectives:

Improve customer communication, reduce citizen confusion, reduce call centre traffic, save money, meet NI14 target.

Mail Items:

Council Tax bills, direct debit letters and housing benefit letters.

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council mailing figures:

Council Tax bills	119,511
Housing/Council Tax Benefit claimants	26,241
Total pieces of mail	145,752
Housing/Council Tax Benefit letters eligible to be matched	23,663
Housing Benefit letters mailing saving	90%
Total mailing saving	16%