

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Reducing costs and increasing efficiency

Area of cost saving: Council Tax bills, Housing/Council Tax Benefit letters and Direct Debit letters

Many Local Authorities mail new year Council Tax bills separately to Housing/Council Tax Benefit letters because their back office systems generate separate print runs and it simply isn't cost effective to match the output together manually. 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 communications many of which just require a simple clarification response.

Business Benefits and Savings

- Housing Benefit claimant mailing saving of 86% every year
- Direct Debit letter saving of 100%
- Ongoing savings
- Better customer communication
- Reduced citizen confusion
- Reduced call centre traffic
- Reduced incoming mail
- Fewer council office walk-ins
- Less unnecessary contact (NI14)
- Improved perception of council
- Less environmental impact

Using the Chester City area data as a pilot Gandlake has eliminated these issues for a fraction of the price at Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&CC). The associated documents are now merged into a single mailing so that the recipient receives all the necessary information in one envelope. This has provided an immediate reduction in the envelopes and postage required, generating a mailing cost saving of 86% each year. Next year CW&CC propose to use the technology across the whole area covering roughly 146,000 council tax bills.

Receiving the two documents at the same time removes confusion and significantly reduces unnecessary contact from the customer. With less customer contact, CW&CC has more time to focus its skills on other areas of the business and towards those in genuine need.

As part of the 2009/10 annual billing CW&CC used this same functionality to merge 100% of its Direct Debit letters saving them even more money. They are also planning to use it for daily Council Tax Bills and Benefit letters throughout the year. This will result in even greater savings and further enhance the image of the council.

In summary, the whole communication process is much slicker, costs are reduced and the perception of the council is enhanced.

"The Gandlake team came up with a tailored solution to meet our needs and worked with us to ensure the job was completed on time."

Nick Joinson, Revenues and Benefits, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Cheshire West & Chester 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. This was done using the Chester City area as a pilot and it is proposed that this will be rolled out across the whole area (146,000 council tax bills) for the 2010/2011 billing run.

Mail Items: Council Tax Bills, Direct Debit letters and Housing Benefit letters

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

Cheshire West & Chester Council mailing figures:

Council Tax bills	52,805
Direct Debit letters	33,466
Housing/Council Tax Benefit letter	9,359
Total pieces of mail	95,630

Direct Debit letters eligible to be matched	33,466
Housing/Council Tax Benefit letters eligible to be matched	8,115

Direct Debit letter mailing saving	100%
Housing Benefit letters mailing saving	86%

Total mailing saving	43%
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“Gandlake provided a cost effective solution to the problem of merging Council Tax Bills with Benefit notifications at the start of the Financial Year.”

Nick Joinson, Revenues and Benefits, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Many councils throughout the UK are using Gandlake software to realise the same cost and efficiency savings as Cheshire West and Chester.

If you would like to find out how this technology can work for you please call us on **01635 524404** or visit www.gandlake.com.

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