

Case Study Ashfield Homes

Ashfield Homes achieves top inspection rating from the Audit Commission.

The background

Ashfield Homes was set up by Ashfield District Council as an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) in April 2002 to manage, maintain and improve 7,300 properties.

Following the formation of the organisation, Ashfield Homes was assessed by the Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate in November 2002. The inspections, carried out every three years, measure performance across areas including customer service, resident involvement, repairs, maintenance, and housing management.

The challenge

The inspection identified areas where Ashfield needed to improve its delivery of housing and services to citizens. One of the key findings from the Audit Commission was that customer service suffered as a result of disparate IT systems. This was a result of inheriting legacy systems. Customer information was scattered across departments.

Ashfield needed to replace the old IT systems it had inherited and bring together its housing information onto one system.

The challenge for Ashfield was to find a trusted partner which would enable it to move to a new housing management system to cover all of its business areas.

The solution

In 2003 Ashfield issued a tender for a housing management solution which would provide a central and integrated system for its 200 staff to access housing information.

Following the tender selection process, Ashfield took the decision to award the contract to IBS OPENSsystems in 2004. Ashfield selected the OPENFinancials, OPENHousing and OPENContractor modules to cover its business areas: finance, housing and repair services.



The results

Setting up an integrated IT solution has enabled Ashfield to receive top recognition from the Audit Commission. Following an inspection in 2005, Ashfield was awarded with an "excellent" three-star service rating.

One of the main reasons for receiving the acclaim was the policies and procedures Ashfield had put in place to track tenant needs. Using the system, staff can now identify potentially vulnerable tenants, such as ethnic minorities and the elderly so that they can provide relevant services to these groups. With a central database, information on ethnic origin is now held on 97% of its tenants.

The solution from IBS has enabled Ashfield to keep tenants at the centre of service delivery and allocate services that reflect tenant needs.

With an integrated housing management solution, Ashfield can now hone in on the collection of rent arrears. This will enable the organisation to improve collection rates and drive a return from the system.

A central housing system has also streamlined Ashfield's reporting. Staff no longer need to print off different pieces of information. Instead, all rental information can be retrieved automatically and customer enquiries can be dealt with more efficiently.

Keith Morris, ICT client project manager, Ashfield Homes, commented:

"IBS demonstrated that it was the right IT partner for us. Its team spent time to understand our needs and took an extremely practical approach. Creating a performance culture from the outset was really important and IBS had a great track record in leading successful housing projects. It has enabled us to excel and provide a high level of service for our housing tenants. Receiving the three-star award from the Audit Commission is a great recognition of everyone's hard work."

Keith Morris, ICT client project manager, Ashfield Homes, commented: "We have been buoyed working with IBS - the partnership can now only go from strength to strength. We can now provide our tenants with more targeted and relevant services and IBS has the right solutions to enable us to do this. Our citizens will continue to notice a real improvement in service, especially the less disadvantaged where we can target and profile the right services for them."

OPENHousing, OPENContractor and OPENFinancials solutions, formerly from IBS OPENSsystems, now belong to Capita Software Solutions.

The future

Ashfield's next plans are to provide its workforce with a mobile working solution. Its estate management team need to conduct site visits and carry out repairs on housing for its tenants. The OPENMobile solution from IBS will enable Ashfield to report on the condition of its housing stock in line with the Decent Homes Standard. It will also provide Ashfield with a fully integrated system for its entire housing services.

Please contact your Capita Housing Account Manager for further details.

2 West Mills
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 5HG

Telephone +44 (0)1635 550088
Facsimile +44 (0)1635 550505

cssenquiries@capita.co.uk
www.capita-software.co.uk

CAPITA