

# CAPITA



## AIMing for savings

Software from Capita has transformed income-handling processes common to housing associations and registered social landlords across the UK.

Paragon Community Housing Group Ltd incorporates Elmbridge Housing Trust (EHT) and Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust (RuTCHT). Formed in April 2007, the Group's main office is in Walton-on-Thames. As a major provider of affordable housing, Paragon manages over 8000 properties throughout Surrey and south west London. Paragon was looking to automate the process of posting rental income to finance systems and therefore reduce the amount of staff time processing the data as well as the accuracy of data.

Andy Anderson, the Project Manager for Application Systems at Paragon, describes the main reasons behind the Group's decision to implement Capita's AIM (income management) product:

**"We recognised that officers were spending an excessive amount of time manually processing files, and that electronic processing had to be introduced. We knew of AIM, and that it was the market leader in income management, so we investigated it's capability for our business and quickly decided that it could deliver immediate time savings and update information more efficiently – in terms of speed and accuracy."**

## Surveying the situation

At the start of the project, a survey was conducted to determine where staff time was focused when processing collected monies. This exercise highlighted that the Finance Team alone were conducting over 200 manual processes manipulating data each week. This data had still to be received by the IT department where a further 15 staff hours per week were spent manipulating and posting data before the process was finally complete. With processes spread over two departments and posted via four individual software interfaces, a desire to increase efficiency in this situation was demonstrated to be very necessary.

## Responding to the results

Following presentation of the results, Paragon opted for Capita's Income Management (AIM) product, which was implemented along with project management, installation and configuration consultancy services.

Capita's Income Management product forms part of the total Capita Payment Management solution. Taking feeds of payment details from other Capita or third party payment solutions, it provides a central transaction database to control income and reconciliation. The implementation of AIM has resulted in the following benefits:

- In excess of 200 manual processes eliminated and replaced with the central, automated solution accommodating various payment methods and validating third party payment files ensuring accurate account posting
- Some files now go through only three processes (essential to AIM functionality), as opposed to the 16 previously, and employ no manual processing
- Automated procedures save 15 staff hours spent formatting data prior to posting within the IT department
- No formatting is now needed – Capita's AIM has been configured to deal with all incoming file formats
- Information can be filtered into single or multiple daily and time-specific, files for onward posting to in-house applications
- The average length of time to process a payment has been reduced from three days to just one day
- Only two of Paragon's staff are needed to interact with the AIM system; a member of each team within the Finance and IT departments
- Improvements to the speed of processing customers' end-of-week payments, adding to greater customer satisfaction.

Of these benefits, in particular the replacement of manual processes with the AIM automated methods, Andy Anderson, comments:

**"A combination of eliminating repetitive manual processes and being able to provide more up to date information means that staff are more confident in the accuracy of the data when taking action."**

Of course, the return on Paragon's investment was at the forefront of deciding upon the AIM implementation, and Andy knew that with Capita's product he was receiving value for money, affirming: **"cost was an important factor in any decision, and with the AIM software and implementation, services were reasonably set and we could see an immediate payback on our investment."**

## Increased functionality

Accompanying the obvious benefits to the speed and ease of data inputting, a further range of positive outcomes have been delivered to Paragon Housing Group. Complete with a comprehensive file import, validation and export functionality, the system is supported by a range of standard reports, as well as Crystal Reports. This is a powerful and easy-to-use reporting tool facilitating the production of bespoke or one-off reports.

Increased accessibility and availability of payment services are offered to residents with the option of making rent payments through a variety of sources including the Post Office, PayPoint outlets, Standing Order, Direct Debit or via the Internet. Payments are then imported using the Income Management system, validated and finally exported to credit the resident's account within the Capita Housing rents application.

Capita's AIM product can be tailored to fit with any organisation wishing to process multiple formats of payments in an automated manner. Andy Anderson confirms this by adding, **"we were able to configure AIM to our needs very easily. We receive files in a wide variety of formats, and AIM can be tailored to process all of them."**

## Aiming for further success

**"I feel, without doubt, that the best asset provided by AIM is the ease of configurability to meet our business requirements, the robustness of the product and the ability to quickly analyse data for financial reconciliation and reporting."**

Andy Anderson, Project Manager (Applications Systems), Paragon Community Housing Group Ltd.

With the implementation of Capita's AIM, the transformation of housing revenue and payment services at Paragon Community Housing Group Ltd has truly been recognised, brought about by automating the input and export of monies and provision of multiple reporting formats. As such, a London-based social housing organisation, of twice the size of Paragon, has seen the results provided by the implementation of Capita's AIM, recognised the clear benefits and have since purchased the payment and data solution.

This vast reduction of processes has resulted in a great saving of time allowing this social housing organization to focus more closely on its primary aim of providing quality affordable housing for the residents of Surrey and south west London.



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