



# Customer Success Story:

London Borough of Brent Revenues and Benefits with Global 360.

## The Organisation

The London Borough of Brent was created out of the reorganisation of London's government in 1965. Today it is one of the most culturally diverse boroughs in the UK, as well as one of the most progressive in terms of introducing and implementing solutions that will improve the lives of its residents.

Brent's Revenues and Benefits Service is responsible for the collection of council tax from about 104,000 households in the borough. This revenue is the 'bread and butter' of the council, providing a significant proportion of its income, which it uses to help pay for the services it provides such as rubbish collection, roads and parking, education and regeneration initiatives.

Almost a quarter of residents live in accommodation supplied by the council or a housing association. In addition, almost a third of households qualifies for housing benefit, and the Revenues and Benefits Service administers this to around 32,000 homes.

## The Challenge

It is vital therefore that council tax collection is made as efficient as possible. It is also essential that

housing benefit payment methods are effective. Failure to address this can leave tenants unable to meet their payments and the council out of pocket. It also acts as a disincentive to private landlords, on whom the council relies heavily as a result of demand for social housing far outstripping supply.

As well as making payments on time, the council must ensure that it does not make overpayments, as it is heavily penalised for any errors that are perceived to be on its part.

In 1995, Brent Council's Revenues and Benefits department introduced an outsourced document imaging system that assisted it in transforming its paper-intensive processes to electronic ones. At the time, this was a very progressive way of managing the payment and collection operation. However, although it moved the service forward, it eventually reached a stage where there was no prospect of it developing further.

## The Solution

In the early part of the 2000s, Brent Council recognised that it needed to radically overhaul all aspects of service delivery for Revenues and

Benefits in order to achieve its ambition of becoming a model of best practice. It took what was considered to be a brave decision to change service delivery methods and IT systems where this was necessary to bring about rapid improvements to performance.

The first step was to bring the Benefits service back in house, and to evaluate the effectiveness of existing IT systems, management information and process management in order to identify changes that could improve efficiency. Concurrent with this, the Revenue and IT service was retendered under new contractual arrangements.

Brent Council acknowledged that it had outgrown its workflow system. It therefore turned to support services company Capita, whose contract with the council was to upgrade this system with a more appropriate one when the time was right. As a result of this, Capita recommended the implementation of Global 360's NX Enterprise business process management solution.

Margaret Read, Head of Revenues and Benefits at Brent Council comments: "Brent Council has always been very forward-thinking in terms of IT management.

While we would obviously never take unnecessary risks, we do strive to make proactive and informed decisions on new solutions that it believes will enhance the services we provide to the community."

The design of the new system View 360 focussed on refining the way in which the department worked. It now allows users to access archived documents immediately on screen, rather than using the time consuming method of an optical juke box, as had been necessary previously. Both of these factors will play an important role in enabling the service to increase processing capacity and operate more efficiently in the future."

Within days of the new system going live, it brought significant benefits to process management. These include complete visibility of working practices, for example spotting bottlenecks before they build up and become a problem and allowing managers to monitor work rather than focussing on assigning tasks as they had done previously. Not only that, but the system itself can automatically determine work allocation when desired, because it understands the business rules and priorities.

The solution also empowers

Revenue and Benefits staff to proactively chase Brent residents for requested information, such as proof of rent or income, required to complete benefit claims. Equally, it guides assessing staff through processes, facilitating a 'right first time approach'. This will help speed up processing and reduce errors. Global 360's NX Enterprise also assists the Revenue and Benefits Service to work closely with the Council's 'One Stop Shops', which provide Brent residents with extensive and speedy walk-in access to useful information. There are six of these outlets in various locations around the borough that, on average, serve around 10,000 Revenues and Benefits customers per month. It is therefore essential that staff can call up the relevant documents on screen while the customer is waiting.

In managing its business processes more efficiently, the Revenues and Benefits Service has brought about greater flexibility for its staff. For example, it is now possible for employees to work remotely, even to the point of enabling satellite operations if necessary.

Ms Read added: "Staff had become

used to the rigidity of our old system and, as a result, had stopped reporting problems because they knew nothing could be done about them. NX Enterprise's View 360 completely reversed this attitude and managers became highly enthusiastic about harnessing its power and flexibility to further improve their business practices – frequently approaching us with new ideas and suggestions."

Brent Council's Revenues and Benefits Department is now able to operate an efficient payment and collection service, which is beneficial to all of the borough's residents. In achieving this, the council has also met other external pressures, such as government initiatives to provide all services online, as well as recommendations on public sector efficiency made by the Gershon report<sup>1</sup>.

Ms Read concludes: "Brent is proud of being progressive in using technology to provide a better service to its residents. We believe that our new business process management solution is a showcase for other local authorities, whom we would strongly encourage to contact us to learn more about the benefits we are gaining from NX Enterprise

business process management solution."

#### Challenges:

Undeveloped workflow system  
Inefficient and rigid working practices

#### Goals:

Effective and efficient collection of revenues and payment of benefits

#### Results:

Reduced processing time  
Work management, rather than allocation of tasks  
Integration with Brent Council's One-Stop-Shops  
Greater staff awareness of other processes that could be automated/improved

#### References

1 An Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency in the UK carried out by Sir Peter Gershon, CBE. The findings, which were published in July 2004, informed the results of the UK government's 2004 spending review.

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