

Partnership with General Dynamics Information Technology has delivered a platform for change.

Lambeth Living was formed on June 30th, 2008 as the not-for-profit, Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO) established by the London Borough of Lambeth. Their vision is to deliver high quality homes and excellent management services to all 34,000 Lambeth residents.



Challenge

- Necessity to deliver high quality homes and excellent management services
- Low customer satisfaction rates
- Considered worst housing provider in London for answering calls

Solution

- Migrate services to General Dynamics Information Technology 24 x 7 contact handling centre service

Outcome

- Savings of £1 million per year
- Call response time reduced from 220 seconds to 25 seconds
- Customer satisfaction survey reports improved by 11 points
- Greater efficiency and consistency across all services
- Now considered close to the best housing provider in London for answering calls

As one of the largest ALMOs in the country in one of the most diverse areas of London, Lambeth Living has faced tremendous challenges in transforming the operation and delivering on their core values: to take personal responsibility; to make the most of the money available; to work together as one team; to tell it like it is; and, above all, to put residents first.

Initially Lambeth Living shared a number of services with Lambeth council - including their contact centre. While this offered a smooth transition to the ALMO, it restricted the rate of change within the operation and the pace at which service delivery could be transformed and improved.

Tina Bull, Head of Service Improvement for Lambeth Living commented, "We were failing to deliver a good enough service to our residents, at best we were only answering 60% of calls within 20 seconds and in some periods we were answering just 15% of calls within 20 seconds." The result was many residents gave up on the contact centre and preferred to engage with Lambeth Living face-to-face; the exact contrary of what is required when focusing on delivering a cost-effective service.

The Drivers for Change

Lambeth Living were aware they needed to improve service delivery. A number of factors came together to drive this change.

Firstly, the Tenants and Residents Survey for 2011/2012 produced an overall satisfaction rating of 52%, far short of the 90+% the leading ALMOs are achieving.

"The service was falling short of our ambitions and was resulting in low resident satisfaction," explained Tina Bull. "We needed to improve response times, deliver more effective management of our contractors and provide a more cost effective service." Secondly, Lambeth Living had an insight into what could be achieved with their 24 hour call handling service. They had utilised the Contact Handling Shared Service (CHSS), formerly known as the pan London Out-Of-Hours Framework Agreement, to contract General Dynamics Information Technology to deliver an out-of-hours

(5pm to 9am) service to its residents. This delivered significant improvements in response levels, reduced the number of service complaints and restored the residents' faith in the ALMO's service.

Lastly the London Borough of Lambeth had decided to outsource their contact centre. Subsequently Lambeth Living was faced with a choice - continue sharing contact centre services with the borough and leverage the selected outsourcer, which would effectively put another level of management between them and the service delivery team, or find a new way to deliver such services.

The Selection Process

Lambeth Living embarks on a comprehensive and thorough procurement process.

The process involved a questionnaire sent to seven potential partners. That list was narrowed to a shortlist of three suppliers taken through a tender process. Putting residents first was paramount in the selection process. To gain the resident's perspective, Lambeth Living included resident members as part of the selection team. They had an active role in the process – meeting with potential partners, reviewing tender responses and attending site visits.

General Dynamics Information Technology came out at the top of the selection process due to two key factors: 1) by working in partnership with Lambeth Living they could replace the existing operation and deliver immediate improvement in service delivery; and 2) they offered far greater value for money.

The Service

General Dynamics Information Technology now provides a full contact centre service to Lambeth Living residents supporting calls ranging from repair requests to rent enquiries.

Phase one of the transition project undertaken by General Dynamics Information Technology involved the daytime service delivered by the borough. This presented a perfect opportunity to realign services to customer needs, improve the management of contractors and streamline processes. Combining people, processes and technology has been central to the successful service transition.

General Dynamics Information Technology utilises a state-of-the-art contact centre platform to ensure calls are professionally answered, queued and routed to the most appropriate agent. An intuitive, upfront Voice Response system helps quickly identify calls for services provided by London Borough of Lambeth. The system maintains seamless service by automatically re-routing these

enquiries directly to the borough's contact centre without the need for the resident to redial.

General Dynamics Information Technology contact centre agents utilise a customer relationship management (CRM) solution to have informed conversations with residents. For repair calls the Repair-Finder tool is used to accurately diagnose the repair, set the priority and allocate the appropriate contractor. Agents also utilise an appointment booking application called OPTI-TIME which provides the resident with a specific appointment time for the repair to be carried out. This provides the resident with the confidence that their enquiry is being managed.

Immediate Improvement

"The first priority was to migrate services to General Dynamics Information Technology without any impact on residents" stated Tina Bull. "This was achieved. Not only did residents experience no disruption in service, they actually saw an immediate improvement."

The contract in place with General Dynamics Information Technology has strict Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for service delivery protection. Since transitioning the service, Lambeth Living has seen an immediate impact on resident satisfaction. Tenancy and Residents customer satisfaction survey results in 2012/2013 improved 11 points, moving from a previous score of 52% up to 63%. Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) is a resident satisfaction monitoring tool used by housing associations. It is linked to several key performance indicators and acts as a health check of core services provided by the housing association.

"Residents have regained their confidence in our contact centre service" stated Tina Bull. "We are much better at getting it right the first time and tenants no longer feel they are being passed from one person or department to another. Significant progress has been achieved and we are much closer to working as a unified team."

This one team approach also extends to Lambeth Living contractors. Through the contact centre, far greater control, visibility and management has been established with contractors. General Dynamics Information Technology, in conjunction with Lambeth Living, is establishing processes that will ensure greater consistency and efficiency across all services. These processes enable Lambeth Living to focus on improving outcomes and capturing accurate information. The output of this is a mechanism for continuous improvement.

"By negotiating the contract and commissioning General Dynamics Information Technology to run our call handling service we're saving £1 million a year."

"Over the past year we've improved from being the worst housing provider in London for answering calls to very nearly the best."

A Platform for Change

Transitioning the contact centre to General Dynamics Information Technology is only the first step on this drive for change. Lambeth Living aspires to be one of the best housing providers in the UK both in terms of the standard of their homes and also in the service they deliver. The next mechanism Lambeth Living is working on to improve services and achieve efficiencies is the concept of “channel shift.” This is the process of proactively shifting the management of customer enquiries from high to low cost channels, while also providing a consistent, integrated and quality service across all customer interactions, whether it be online, by email, phone or via social media.

Lambeth Living is working with General Dynamics Information Technology and embracing this concept of channel shift. The benefits are two-fold: 1) residents will have greater choice in the way they access services; and 2) Lambeth Living will benefit from utilising more cost-effective channels.

A new-look website has been introduced, providing a range of self-service options. The contact centre will be pivotal in encouraging and supporting residents to take advantage of these new services. Lambeth Living is also introducing additional functionality into their CRM system to further enable seamless self-service and deliver a single view of the customer to anyone engaging with a resident.

“I really feel that with General Dynamics Information Technology we have a partner that will enable us to transform the way we deliver service to our residents” continues Tina Bull. “We have ambitious plans, all centred on putting the resident first. Not only does General Dynamics Information Technology share our vision and passion, they also have a great deal to contribute in making our vision a reality.”

GENERAL DYNAMICS
Information Technology

Cottons Centre • Cottons Lane
London, SE1 2QG • www.uk.gdit.com
Tel. +44 (0) 207 939 3600
info-uk@gdit.com