

# CAPITA

## Capita Contractor – helping homes improve services for residents Colchester borough homes

Colchester Borough Homes' goal is to be the best housing management organisation in the East of England, delivering a high quality service to its customers. As part of this objective they have adopted Capita Software Services' Contractor module, a software package to manage housing stock repairs. The use of this software has helped to improve the efficiency and quality of service offered to residents of Colchester Borough Homes.

### Business overview

Colchester Borough Homes was created by Colchester Borough Council as an arm's-length management organisation owned by the council. The organisation was established to provide tenancy management and maintenance of the council's social housing stock of 6185 properties. Colchester Borough Homes deals with nearly 40,000 calls from residents annually and manages around 27,000 repairs to homes.

### The requirement

Until 2008, Colchester Borough Homes was in partnership with an external company whose role it was to manage any repairs to the housing stock. Repairs were logged into the contractor's system which had to interface with Capita's Housing module to access current information on the tenants and homes.

Often information about particular jobs did not get through to field operatives because the data sharing was not working effectively. This could sometimes place them in difficult positions, for example, they may not be informed if a householder had specific needs such as a disability which may prevent them getting to the door quickly or was known to exhibit challenging behaviour. Similarly, because the system did not always update successfully there was the potential for repairs to be ordered on properties which had recently been sold.



**"The situation was not ideal. It was costly to maintain two databases and field operatives were simply not given enough information to do their jobs effectively. Ultimately it was affecting the service we were offering customers,"** says Paul Clarke, business development manager at Colchester Borough Council.

When the contract came to an end with the repairs supplier, a full independent review of the systems and processes to manage repairs was undertaken.

**"The review uncovered 44 'faults' or areas for concern with the old software system that needed to be addressed. For example, to enter a repair took a total of 35 steps or key strokes. When you are dealing with 150 calls a day this took up a huge amount of staff time needlessly,"** says Clarke. **"Combined with the data sharing problems the situation was unacceptable and we needed to change.**

**"We had three options; we could maintain the status quo, enhance the method of communication between the two software systems or change the system entirely. The first two choices seemed to us to be taking a step backwards and in many ways throwing good money after bad. Only the final option would improve our business and take our service in a direction that would make it more effective,"** comments Clarke.

### The solution

After investigating the products that were available, Colchester Borough Homes decided that the best option was Capita Contractor. The software fitted most closely to the aims of the organisation to provide a solution that would be fit for the future. It also integrated seamlessly with the Capita Housing software that they were already running.

## The solution contd.

**"We are now able to have a full and rounded picture about every resident and property. For every situation that we enter, we have access to all the relevant information we need. The safety and effectiveness of our team has been much improved,"** explains Clarke.

The system allows repair jobs and resources to be tracked efficiently, and with a new schedule of rates to be introduced shortly, these can be costed and monitored accurately. In addition, appointments can be booked, monitored and reported on. This provides Colchester with important business intelligence information which helps in understanding the performance of the business in responding to repairs.

Contractor also supports the use of mobile technology so field operatives can report on and receive jobs via PDAs.

**"The system has eliminated many of the inefficiencies and problems that previously existed,"** comments Clarke.

## The benefits

Capita Contractor has had a clear effect on the way Colchester Borough Homes works and made responding to repair jobs easier, safer and more effective.

The amount of time that an operative takes to complete a repair entry has now been reduced to 12 key strokes from 35, making it quicker to record repairs into the system.

The mistakes due to information not being passed between systems have now been eliminated as both Capita Housing and Capita Contractor use the same data; no interface is required. **"It has been good to put an end to errors which have been costly in the past and could also put our repair team at additional risk."**



The use of Contractor via mobile technology has improved the service for residents too. **"Our operatives receive and update jobs via their PDAs reducing the need to constantly return to the office to pick up paperwork. In addition, they receive a lot more information about the property and resident,"** says Julian Ransom, a senior consultant with Ridge Property and Construction Consultants, who has been brought in by Colchester to manage the mobile implementation. **"There was an unexpected benefit in using the PDAs as field operatives could access the internet during a repair to get more information on a particular boiler if required, for example, or research spare parts. This is helping them progress a repair job more quickly."**

**"In the near future, the mobile technology will also help us be more accurate in fixing appointment times with residents and ensure we are optimising staff time; if all scheduled jobs are finished earlier than expected we can send operatives details of servicing work that needs to be carried out,"** says Ransom. **"We set out with the aim of creating a system fit for the future and I believe we have done that."**

Colchester Borough Homes has also adopted an online, pictorial diagnostics system to help the residents themselves identify and accurately report the nature of a fault. The resident can then either email the repair request, or if they call in to report the repair, they have a better idea of what it is they are reporting. This will help eliminate unnecessary visits to properties and ensure when field operatives are called to a home, they are better prepared when they arrive.

**"The aim is better service for our residents and I do believe that we are achieving this,"** states Clarke.

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