



Company Name

Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council

Industry

Local Government

Web site

<http://council.blackburnworld.com/>

Business Benefits

- Supports eGovernment initiatives
- Service level agreement management
- Simplifys and consolidates work flow
- Provides citizens with a single point of contact
- Reduced lead time for service delivery

Quick Stats

Users:	20
Citizens Supported:	100,000
Calls per Day:	400

Centralised Citizen Support at Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council

BACKGROUND

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is a unitary authority providing a complete range of local government services to around 100,000 residents. Delivery of a number of these services including cleansing services, direct repairs of council-owned properties such as schools, and grounds maintenance has been contracted to the council's own Direct Services Organisation (DSO). The DSO undertakes work in line with its service level agreements with the council at the behest of customers ranging from council employees in other departments through school head teachers to the general public.

building repairs can't be handled online, the DSO is keen to take advantage of the benefits of eGovernment – such as reduced cycle times and lower costs - in its customer service operations.

However, the eGovernment agenda is just one element in the DSO's long-term commitment to improving services while cutting costs. The ultimate aim for the DSO is to offer the right combination of service and price so it can successfully bid for new work from the council and retain existing contracts when they come up for renewal.

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Andy Ridehalgh, Systems Administrator, Capita

MEASUREMENT

HEAT was originally introduced in 1997 to allow the DSO to track and monitor requests for service, particularly the complex processes associated with many cleansing services. The information provided by HEAT allows the DSO to respond to enquiries about the progress of particular requests, track the organisation's performance against its service level agreements with the council, and identify opportunities for improvement.

"HEAT gives us the ability to measure the progress of individual calls and send alerts automatically if an action hasn't been taken by a certain time, while helping us to gain useful statistics on our overall performance," explains Andy Ridehalgh, formerly systems administrator in the DSO at Blackburn with Darwen and now Systems Administrator at Capita, which has recently assumed operational responsibility for the DSO's systems under a public-private partnership.

As well as installing HEAT at the DSO's depot, HEAT clients were provided to customer departments at the Town Hall, allowing customer-facing staff there to enter details of requests from the public directly in to HEAT. By eliminating the need to forward requests on paper forms, the DSO has been able to cut the lead time for services significantly.

MEETING TARGETS

In common with other local authorities, Blackburn with Darwen is under pressure from central government to set and meet targets for making its services available electronically where ever possible. While emptying bins and carrying out



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SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT

The support provided by HEAT has since allowed the council to undertake a major reorganisation of its front-office operations. A centralised customer services team has been created which brings together staff from the DSO with staff previously based in specific departments at the Town Hall. Customers can now call a single telephone number to report problems or request services, while staff have been retrained to allow them to handle calls for any service.

Ridehalgh points out, “We couldn’t have created a centralised team without HEAT. We needed to be able to share databases, share workloads and create people who can handle any kind of call. HEAT immediately provided us with benefits by allowing us to change the organisation in that way.”

MANAGING SUPPORT

The changes were possible because HEAT allows the council to set up a number of different call types, each with their own detail screens, which guide help desk staff through each specific service process and ensure they gather the necessary information. The cleansing call group, for instance, contains 11 different call types, ranging from missed refuse collections through requests to remove bulky items on to calls from the police to provide cleansing services after road traffic accidents.

HEAT has been integrated with other systems and sources of information – including a database of 65,000 profiles of households - so that customer service staff can provide citizens with as complete a picture as possible when they call. For instance, if a householder calls to complain their bin has not been emptied, customer service staff have access to information from refuse collection teams which may provide a reason: the bin may not have been outside at the time of collection or access to the back gully where the bin was placed may have been blocked. Reporting tools allow the DSO to identify persistent issues, such as back gullies that are regularly blocked, and take the appropriate action.

HEAT is also integrated with the DSO’s operational systems so that work orders can be placed for anything from making an appointment to collect a missed bin to hiring a contractor to carry out school maintenance. The tracking, auto-escalation and other workflow features in HEAT allow staff to use the system to support complex processes, such as the procedures for dealing with incidents involving DSO vehicles and pedestrians, properties or other vehicles.

STREAMLINED PROCESSES

Prior to installing HEAT, the council relied on paper-based systems which involved a great deal of co-ordination between staff working in different council departments. HEAT has allowed the council to centralise administration and streamline and simplify the logistics of delivering DSO services. The customer service team is now able to handle more work with the same number of people, while improving response times for customers.

The benefits to the DSO are clear: it has already retained the cleansing contract for the borough and successfully retendered for building maintenance work. “HEAT allows us to demonstrate that the DSO is performing well and constantly enhancing and streamlining its processes, while it enables us to spot problems and escalate issues before they have a serious impact on the quality of our services,” Ridehalgh explains.

HEAT has also allowed the DSO to introduce a single customer service phone number for the public, making it easier for them to contact the council. On top of that, because the customer service team have access to the full range of facilities provided by HEAT, they can resolve many more issues in the first call and immediately provide citizens with information about when an issue will be resolved. All of this has helped the council to make good progress towards meeting its eGovernment targets.

EXPANDING THE SERVICE

The DSO will continue to develop its use of HEAT, evaluating new features as they are released to see how they can be applied to improve the DSO’s ability to deliver services to its customers. It is already planning to develop a solution to handle reports of abandoned vehicles: the escalation and workflow procedures in HEAT will allow the council to manage the multiple stages of this complex process easily and will smooth collaboration with the many agencies involved.