



Delivering  
Better For  
Less

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# Delivering Better For Less

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Since 1989 Omfax has been helping social housing organisations to improve the way they communicate and engage with their residents. Over the past two decades we have seen significant change, however, we cannot remember a time where the pressure has been greater for the social housing sector to reduce costs, while at the same time improve the level of service offered to residents.

This document draws on our 25 years' experience of working in the sector to outline how housing organisations can achieve what often seems to be the impossible – DELIVERING BETTER FOR LESS. We highlight where combining people, best practice and technology can deliver more efficient and improved customer service, and we provide examples of how some of our clients are making a real difference.



**Orbit Group** is one of the largest housing groups in the country, providing more than 37,000 high-quality homes.

The Orbit ambition is to run an efficient and effective organisation, providing value for money services to our customers.

**We will achieve value for money by:**

- Reducing our costs to get the same outputs
- Reducing other resources and inputs for the same outputs
- Getting greater outputs with improved quality for the same inputs

[Orbit Group Annual Report 2011-2012](#)

# Varney Service Transformation Review

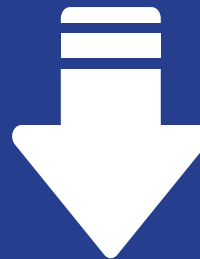
Sir David Varney was asked by the Chancellor to advise him on the opportunities for transforming the delivery of public services. His Service Transformation review in December 2006 looks at how the channels through which services are delivered can be made more efficient and responsive to the needs of citizens and businesses and to achieve a better deal for the taxpayer.

Although these targets that were identified in this review are old, they are still highly relevant to the social housing contact centre world, where small improvements can drive significant cost savings.



## Key Points from Varney

The establishment of performance indicators and targets for contact centre operations, based around the objective of at least 25% reduction in costs by the end of 2007, which could include:



**50% reduction**  
in the number of information requests handled by telephone.



Making the web the **primary access point** for all simple information and advice requests.

# 80%

of contacts made by citizens or businesses to be resolved on first contact



**50%**  
reduction in avoidable contact



# Making it Happen



# 44%

In a recent survey, 44% of customers stated they do not believe that companies care what they think.

Source: IPSOS MORI 2011

# 2.4%

of calls in the public sector are complaints – 18% of these relate to the contact centre and 82% of these relate to the wider business.

Source: Contact Babel – The UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide 2012

## Contact Centre Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction

72% - First Call Resolution

71% - Polite and Friendly Agents

48% - Short Queue Times

29% - No Call Transfer

23% - Short IVR Menus

12% - Short Call Times

10% - Long Opening Hours

Source: Contact Babel – The UK Contact Centre Decision-Makers' Guide 2012

# Contact Centre Productivity

## Making The Best Use Of Advisors – To Exceed Customer Expectations

Omfax understands resident engagement and, in particular, how this can be achieved efficiently and effectively through the contact centre. We have helped over 80 organisations to address the key areas of performance through intelligent scripting - increasing productivity and creating an improved resident experience.

### Increase First Call Resolution

By ensuring that every advisor has the knowledge at their fingertips to deal with the complete range of potential resident enquires, more calls are handled first time. This not only improves customer satisfaction but for each call resolved first time, another call is prevented, thereby significantly reducing call volumes.

### Identify Avoidable Calls

To identify which calls are avoidable, it is vital that you accurately capture the nature of each and every call into the contact centre. With intelligent scripting, each call can be categorised, along with the outcome. This enables quick and effective identification of those calls that could be avoided and provides managers with the information to act to minimise their occurrence.

### Reduce Average Call Lengths

With intelligent scripting, advisors are guided through each and every call in the most effective way. This not only enables more positive outcomes to be achieved on the first call, but also ensures that each call takes no longer than necessary.

### Reduce Contact Centre Capacity

By optimising call lengths, reducing repeat calls and identifying those calls that do not require an advisor, housing organisations are able to reduce call volumes and increase the capacity of their operation. This enables them to spend more time speaking to residents who need their help, as well as take-on more services in the front-line contact centre.

## Increasing First Call Resolution...



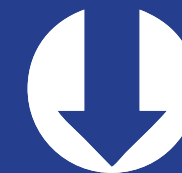
“Contact centres tend to be focused on call volumes and average handle times and although important to us, we do things differently at SCH we focus on how effective we are at dealing with customer enquiries. We know if we continue to get this right, the other metrics will be right.”



Lourdes Sharpe, Head of Customer Services, Solihull Community Housing.

# 20%<sup>SAVING</sup>

**Bromford Living** experienced a significant reduction in call handle time down from 3.5 minutes to 2.8 minutes saving 20%.



Avoidable calls down 20% in year 1 at **Family Housing Birmingham**

# Enabling Lean Process

## Delivering The Right Service, First Time

Delivering better for less is about ensuring that best practice is not an intention but becomes the norm. It is about dealing with resident enquiries efficiently and effectively, about setting the right expectations and then ensuring a seamless process from the front-line through to service execution.

## Best Practice

When residents engage with your organisation through the contact centre you are given the perfect opportunity to review processes and significantly optimise in line with 'lean working'. Contact centre monitoring and reporting allows you to ascertain inefficiencies and potential blockages in workflow. Through intelligent scripting you can define and control processes such as, case management and workflow. Intelligent scripting ensures the processes are being followed and therefore a consistent level of service is delivered.

## Consistency

Treating residents fairly is key. By defining processes and policies and then ensuring these are adopted through intelligent scripting, less personal interpretations fall to the individual, they are guided by the systems they use to deliver consistent service. This instils confidence in customers, advisors and the organisation as a whole.

## Completeness

Thorough data collection and processing at every step is key to process optimisation. Intelligent scripting and case management ensures that advisors and officers collect essential information, ask the correct questions and proceed with the call appropriately. It aids customer advisors in providing the best possible customer service by 'steering' the conversations. By having the correct information collected on the call, the activity can then be scheduled correctly and completed first time.

## Accuracy

It is not just about having the information, it is about trusting the information. Through intelligent scripting, less reliance is placed on the individual's knowledge. They are guided through each process, ensuring they accurately gather information, identify needs and define requirements, so when the task is handed over, the receiver further along the chain can trust the information they are given. Ultimately accuracy reduces repeat calls to the contact centre and drives up first time fix.



↓ 12%

**Solihull Community Housing** reduced avoidable contact by 12% in 2011 by identifying, understanding and removing unnecessary and wasted contact. Lourdes Sharpe stated, "We achieved this by using Keyfax scripts to record contact trends and tackle the contact which didn't add value. This was previously not possible without the using scripting."

# One Housing Organisation - One Contact

## Improving Accessibility And Delivering A Single Joined-Up Service

The use of contact centres within social housing has been a great success in delivering a very accessible service in a highly efficient manner. Omfax is helping housing organisations to complete this transition, creating a single contact point for all enquiries.

## One Advisor, Every Service

With the right systems and intelligent scripting, such as Keyfax from Omfax, it is possible to equip advisors with the information and tools they require to deal with every type of enquiry, whoever it comes from. This makes life easier for the resident and gives them one number to call, gives confidence to advisors to handle any call and for the housing organisations it creates economies of scale of centralised service delivery.

## Holistic Customer Management

Through integration of intelligent scripts into CRM and Housing Management systems ensuring a joined-up process between frontline and back office systems, advisors are able to do far more than answer a single enquiry, they are able to build trust between landlord and tenant. They are also able to follow-up on previous enquiries, identify any overdue visits, payments or information requests, and deal with all of these on a single call.

## One Call, Multiple Enquiries

Poor service is being told you need to be transferred to someone else, or worse still, you need to call another number. With intelligent scripting empowering advisors, one call sees all enquiries resolved – better for the resident and more efficient for the housing organisation.

## Driving Productivity of Specialists

The more that can be done on the front-line, the more pressure is taken off valuable specialists, such as housing officers, inspectors and managers. They no longer have to accept first line or escalated calls, chase residents or book their own appointments. They gain the benefits of a professional, front-line support function that drives their productivity.

Call resolved first time in contact centre takes 180 seconds, call initially taken in contact centre and then requires a call back from specialists takes 120 seconds + 180 seconds = total 300 seconds.

# 166%

more time



Single call into contact centre takes 180 seconds, two individual calls therefore takes 360 seconds, two enquiries handled on same call takes 240 seconds =

# 33%

less time



## FIVE BECOME ONE

**Bromford Living** was operating five separate contact centres. The decision was taken to merge these to create one virtual hub, split across two locations but with one phone number. This meant it was much easier for customers to get in touch with the organisation and for management to get a 'big picture' view. Keyfax was a critical element in making this work - without Keyfax **Inter-View** we would have been unable provide our staff with the tools to do their job effectively - this was evident in customer and advisor feedback.



# Making Self-Service Work

## Delivering More Services At Less Cost

Self-service offers a significant win-win for both housing organisations and their residents – it makes services more accessible and it significantly reduces the cost of dealing with enquiries. Omfax helps housing organisations to deliver the same information available in their contact centre directly to residents through self-service.

## Reducing Cost

On average, it is possible to handle 8 online enquiries from residents for the same cost as handling a single enquiry in the contact centre. With such levels of potential cost savings, it is imperative that housing organisations find a way to make self-service work for them and their residents if they are to achieve their cost saving goals.

## Consistent Service

Deploying self-service does not have to be complex, nor does it require significant effort or investment. We are helping housing organisations to extend the use of Keyfax, intelligent scripting tools in their contact centres, to deliver highly intuitive and consistent service in web-based self-service applications.

## Extended Accessibility

There are two major benefits of self-service to residents. Firstly, there is no waiting time - services are instantly available. Secondly, they do not just operate within office hours - they are available and accessible 24/7. Residents can choose to deal with their enquiry, when and where they want.

## Assisted Self-Service

We recognise that the success of self-service is down to how easy it is for residents to adopt such services. Being able to provide a seamless service between contact centre and self-service is key. If the resident struggles to complete an online form, an advisor should be able to assist them, teaching them to serve themselves in the future.

£8.23



face-to-face

£3.21



telephone contact

39p



web transaction

Socitm, the professional association for public sector ICT management, estimates the cost of each customer **face-to-face contact is £8.23** and each **telephone contact is £3.21**. In stark comparison, each **web transaction is estimated to cost just 39p**.

Source: Socitm Insight December 2009



In 2011, the government stated that it can cost over £10 to process a form manually, such as a driving license application, whereas the **cost drops to under £2 when forms are submitted and managed online**.

# Digital Inclusion

## Interacting With Residents, In The Way They Want To Interact

Omfax first helped housing organisations to better engage and communicate with their residents through printed guides covering tenancy, repairs reporting and handy-hints for looking after their home. With government initiatives such as 'digital by default', the impetus is on making public services accessible primarily through the internet. It does not mean abandoning those groups less likely to access the internet, rather it is intended to bring about a culture whereby those people who can access the internet by having the appropriate skills and equipment, will do so in the first instance. We are now helping housing organisations to communicate such information digitally.

## Following The Lead Of GOV.UK

A new website for accessing government services and information, designed to be simpler, clearer and faster was launched in October 2012. [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) demonstrates that the government is really serious about making this a reality and they are not just writing reports about it. This move is setting the pace and tone for engaging with people.

## For Residents

It is key that housing organisations offer choice of online and offline communication channels. Those residents that prefer to use SMS, the web or smartphone apps to access information and interact, should be encouraged to do so. In the same manner as we take the intelligent scripts from the contact centre and make them available as self-service applications, we are delivering the same information ensuring a consistent service experience.

## Blended Communication Channels

Housing organisations will gain cost savings by gradually moving contact to self-service and digital methods. However, those that prefer to pick up the phone or visit in person will still be catered for. Omfax helps organisations to deliver the perfect blend of communication options to allow high quality customer service. No group is being isolated, left behind or ignored whether than be an elderly person that has never used the internet or a young person who wishes to contact their housing organisation only through their website.



**Martha Lane Fox commented,** "The creation of GOV.UK is as profound a moment for us as citizens as the laying the first railway track or the designing the first school curriculum - it's the beginning of the blueprint, values and style for the next wave of services that we will use into the next century."

Ofcom's 2011 Communications Market Report states:

**"the UK is a nation addicted to smartphones"**



"2011-12 was a year of big changes, the year that Bromford really embraced social media and video. So it should come as no surprise that, when it comes to this year's annual report, #ChangingLives, we've binned the traditional print product and gone digital. Taking our cue from the world of Twitter and Facebook, we've called this year look back #changinglives. We feel this sums up the way our proactive approach is transforming the lives and expectations of our customers." **Bromford Group**

**The increasing pace of adoption of new technologies.** While it took 15 years for half of the UK population to get a mobile phone and 14 years to get multi-channel TV, newer technologies such as online catch up TV and social networking websites reached this landmark in just four years.



4 years



14 years

15 years

# Enabling Greener Practices

## Less Paper, Less Driving, Less Wastage

Every housing organisation has a responsibility to continually reduce their carbon footprint and to think and act greener. Omfax is helping housing organisations to do this through reducing the amount of paper produced and enabling them to work more efficiently.

## Reducing Printed Material

We estimate that as much as 90% of residents would prefer to receive correspondence instantly by email rather than a printed letter – if only they were asked. This can save as much as £2-4 per correspondence and drive towards a much greener way of working. For example, based on a housing association that sends one letter per quarter to tenants with 10,000 houses in their stock they would make an annual saving of approximately **£120,000**.

## Less Wastage

Through lean processes, accurate diagnosis and better communication with residents, more activities are completed first time, reducing wasted journeys, incomplete jobs and wasted materials.

## Reduce Driving

By accurately defining and categorising requests from residents relating to services they need, such as repairs, far better scheduling of resources can be performed. This optimises not only field workers time but also their route, ensuring they minimise travel, have to return to the office less and reduces their carbon footprint.

## Energy Efficiency

Digital inclusion enables more effective information and advice to be given to residents in the way they want to receive this. It enables key value exchanges to take place in particular advising residents on how they can save energy – reducing their expense and making communities as a whole greener.



Based on the average cost of sending a letter SCH could potentially save up to **£3,000 per year** on avoided paper mailing.

In 2011, **Solihull Community Housing** sent 2662 documents electronically (via the scripting system) which would otherwise have gone out in the post. This was quicker for the customer. It also saved paper, print and postage costs and of course the admin to process the letters and frank them for mailing.”

Lourdes Sharpe, Solihull Community Housing



# Summary

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By focusing on the key areas covered in this document, Omfax believe that social housing organisations are able to deliver BETTER FOR LESS. The government is taking the lead by embracing the affordable technology available, coupled with best practice, to deliver significant cost reductions.

Take the first step. Call the Omfax team for advice on how to get on the road to delivering better for less. With extensive experience in this sector, we are ideally placed to help you make the most of the opportunity and avoid the potential pitfalls.

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