

Dudley MBC, in the West Midlands, has a busy Housing Income Team catering for a wide range of public accommodation requirements.

Industry Sector

Housing
Client contact

Project Objectives

Dudley MBC needed to free up resources and increase contact with customers using existing staff, to maximise its income collection following the Universal Credit [UC] roll out.

“We chose a fully blended inbound and outbound **rostrvm cloud** solution, because they offered a good quality product and best value for money.”

Jim Moore, IT Manager for Place, Dudley MBC

The Housing Income Team now benefits from a fully blended inbound and outbound **rostrvm** solution. This helps to mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform and the implementation of Universal Credit. It supports tenants, maximises rental income collections and enables the council to ‘do more with less’.

The next generation **rostrvm cloud** solution includes:

- **Inbound** Interactive Voice Response (IVR), providing relevant messaging, menus and intelligent contact routing to appropriate advisors or specific services, such as the 24-hour call pay line.
- Callers are told their position in the inbound queue and are offered various options. With **rostrvm CallBack** and **QueueBack** they can choose to be called back, or hang up but maintain their place until a Duty Officer is free to help.
- **rostrvm** uses caller ID to find the customer’s account number and bring up their details before the Duty Officer answers the phone. Officers are offered the opportunity to use scripts as prompts if

wanted.

- An automated **outbound** dialling system, utilised for rental collections and reminders, including outbound voice campaigns. It ensures tenants get the message and helps them to respond.
- Integrated text messaging for appointment reminders, confirmations and improved tenant engagement.
- Ability to record contact outcome and analyse it for training, quality control and compliance.
- **rostrvm** performance management system, providing real-time visibility of operations and enabling the department to tailor reports, use dashboards etc. Historical information also allows the team to make improvements based on metrics.

The challenges

Before Universal Credit (UC) was introduced, tenants’ Housing Benefit (HB) was paid directly to the council by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP); now

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Case study continued:

the Housing element of Universal Credit goes directly to the tenant instead - and they are responsible for paying their rent to the council.

The roll-out of UC and other Welfare Reforms therefore has a big impact on all concerned. The main concerns were:

- The likelihood of increasing bad debt.
- A growing workload for income management teams.

DWP Learning Demonstrations made available to councils showed that they had to communicate proactively with tenants to inform, educate and support them about moving over to UC.

Significantly, the DWP demonstrations indicated that landlord contact with tenants must increase by 300-400% just to maintain the previous position in relation to arrears. To achieve this without automated technology, DWP suggested that council income teams might have to triple headcount in certain areas to meet the UC challenge - which in most cases was not viable.

Dudley MBC needed to free up resources and increase contact with customers using existing staff. It had to maximise its income collection and at least match “best case” rates, following the completion of the first phase of the Universal Credit [UC] roll out. Dudley’s Housing Income Team is also looking to deliver a reduction in Enforcement action and sustain more tenancies in the future.

Jim Moore, IT Manager for Place, said: “The previous dialling strategy within Housing Income Management was to manually call tenants in arrears, predominately when an arrears action was raised on our Northgate Housing Management system. Only a proportion of those calls got through straight away and the majority were unanswered, which was wasted effort. This situation would become even worse after the roll-out of UC so, after research, we decided to implement an automated outbound dialler from a market-leading company and employ a reduced number of additional staff to help.”

The solution needed to comply with the requirements of the Public Services Network (PSN) and had to be in place within nine months from go ahead on the project, ready for the final phase of the roll-out of UC for Dudley Council tenants.

The solution

Jim Moore said, “We went through a tender process and chose **rostrvm cloud** service, because they offered a good quality product and best value

Highlight

“Having inbound and outbound capabilities enables us to use every means of engaging with our customers and take proactive, effective action.”

Yvonne Steele, Income Manager, Dudley MBC

Case study continued:

for money. **rostrvm** complies with PSN rules and has already been successfully deployed at Midland Heart to solve similar challenges to those faced by Dudley MBC, so we knew they could deliver.”

rostrvm is an enterprise-class, multichannel platform with next generation functionality, so Dudley have now added inbound services too, giving them a fully blended solution.

Highlight

“Another benefit is the ability to record contact and listen back, for quality and compliance. This provides us with valuable insights. For example, the length of time each call takes and wrap-up times, in relation to the standard of the customer experience. These recordings help us to understand issues and any additional training needed to enhance our service.”

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The **rostrvm** platform is compatible with Dudley MBC’s existing Northgate Housing Management system and ensures that when Income Officers answer calls, they receive only “live” calls, where a contact replies.

The results

Jim Moore says, “The project team at Rostrvm has provided a very good service during the system’s implementation and a smooth transition to day-to-day support after going live.”

With **rostrvm**, Dudley MBC has been able to reduce significantly the number of additional income management staff it has needed to employ, compared to its initial prediction.

The slick management of the import and export to and from the Northgate Housing system and the integration with **rostrvm** has enabled the Income team to provide an efficient service.

As well as providing intelligent contact routing to Duty Officers, **rostrvm** can route **inbound** contacts to Service Officers who deal with specific cases. This improves the speed, consistency and overall effectiveness of Dudley MBC’s response.

Yvonne says, “Another benefit is the ability to record contact and listen back, for quality and compliance. This provides us with valuable insights. For example, the length of time each call takes and wrap-up times, in relation to the standard of the customer experience. These recordings help us to understand issues and any additional training needed to enhance our service. We do have the option of using scripts when answering calls too, which some advisors use. They’re just there as a prompt really.”

Outbound

The **rostrvm** automated, proactive contact capability has removed the need to manually analyse accounts and telephone tenants to chase rent arrears. It's configurable so that Dudley MBC can set the number of different repeat contacts driven from a single case; follow up calls, texts and answer phone messages.

SMS (texting) functionality enables the council to remind tenants when a payment is due. Low-level arrears actions can also be automated, increasing the number of payments and freeing up staff resource to focus on other cases.

After receiving a message from the outbound system, the tenant makes the initial call back and Dudley MBC's reference sites have indicated the call is slightly easier to handle, as they are wanting to engage to manage the issue.

The outbound system also leaves evidence of attempted contact with tenants without manual input and it will reschedule these contact attempts where required.

Performance management

Jim Moore says, "The **rostrvm** performance management function is another great benefit, enabling the Income team to tailor reports, use dashboards and integrate tenant responses in the Housing/Arrears management systems."

Yvonne adds, "We can monitor contact centre activity such as rates of rent collection. The system allows us to see information easily, like promises to pay and level of arrangements in place, so we can action the data efficiently."

The management information has made Dudley MBC more aware of the best ways to establish contact with customers going forward. It helps the team make better decisions. For example, they can use the call history to see when a customer is more likely to be available and be precise about when they contact them. These metrics can be used when setting the outbound dialler too.

Yvonne adds, "Performance management metrics give us a genuine understanding about our contact with customers. It makes everything visible, such as the number of calls, time of call, details of who it was from and what it concerned. It highlights the behaviours we want to drive and gives us actionable insights into how we should manage the workload."

Highlight

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**Jim Moore, IT Manager
for Place**

Case study continued:

For example, **rostrvm** reduces abandoned calls and ensures contact from customers like voicemails are actioned in a timely way. The team can run a report on the number of calls being lost and organise for people to receive a call back.

rostrvm also provides metrics on peaks and troughs in contact centre traffic, enabling Dudley MBC to manage the flow of calls and demand on service. They can blend by, for example, switching officers from inbound to outbound in quieter times and vice versa.

Yvonne concludes, “We’ve definitely upgraded our capabilities and can offer higher levels of customer service. Even though we’re managing increasing numbers of cases, with **rostrvm**, our arrears have gone down by 8%. We’ve managed to reduce the debt because we have greater engagement with customers and can proactively chase payments.”

In conclusion

“Even though we’re managing increasing numbers of cases, with **rostrvm**, our arrears have already gone down by 8%. We’ve managed to reduce the debt because we have greater engagement with customers and can proactively chase payments.”

Yvonne Steele, Income Manager, Dudley MBC



Just add rostrvm

rostrvm simplifies your existing call centre and back office technology and processes so that they play well together. We do this with innovation and flexibility; qualities that are all too rare in a market that is largely served by traditional offerings from the traditional vendors with the traditional limitations.

We deliver tailored solutions and a unique combination of benefits that leave our competition standing:

- Commercial frameworks that really benefit your business. **rostrvm** works on site or hosted in the cloud and can be acquired on a capex, opex, subscription or pay-per-use basis.
- Support and improve any telephone system and IT environment. Why throw away your existing investment when you can enhance it cost effectively and with minimal risk?
- A truly integrated platform that supports truly integrated functionality. One administration, configuration and information environment for total control of inbound, outbound and back office contact and processes.

Our company

We're a British software company. We design, develop and support the **rostrvm** suite of applications and have a dedicated team of experts all based in Woking, Surrey UK.

We have a very demanding and loyal customer base that relies on us for the provision and support of their core call handling and process management functions. See our website for more case studies.

As a privately-held company we maintain a strong culture of independence, which is increasingly rare in our market sector. We see our independence as a major benefit to our customers and partners - it guarantees the openness of our technology and the objectiveness of our approach and advice.

What now?

You can find out more about us and what we do on our website. If you like what you see why don't you drop us a line or give us a call to arrange a meeting? We'll make it worth your while.

All of our people are call centre and process management experts with years of experience. We're used to dealing with all sorts of people, from those who know exactly what they want to those who haven't got a clue!

We don't have all the answers but you can be sure of the knowledgeable approach and the can-do attitude that consistently meets and exceeds the expectations of our customers, so they can do the same for theirs.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.