

IMPROVING HB SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY USING NPMF & INTERCEPT: WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Housing Benefits department at Wealden District Council offers superior service to the community due to a combination of successful factors – experienced leadership, a well-trained and community-oriented team, and SunGard Public Sector NPMF and Intercept software applications that enhance their streamlined claims process.

Housing Benefits Manager at Wealden District Council, Ian Nisbet first heard of the National Performance Management Framework (NPMF) as a result of SunGard Public Sector establishing and winning the tender as the premier supplier for Housing Benefits software in Scotland. "I was very impressed with NPMF and wanted to avail of using the software at Wealden. We've made a very good decision." Ian is a well-respected member of Local Authority Housing Benefits, relied on in the HB community by the DWP for best practices. His valued perspective and opinion embodies 25 years of seeing and experiencing changes in the Local Government. "I began working recovering rates and was asked to work in Housing Benefits back in 1982", says Ian. "I thought this was going to be a bit of extra work..." he says with a grin.

Wealden, where 8,500 claims are processed per annum, is a regular user of Intercept. Since their implementation of Intercept earlier this year, Ian says they have continually improved identification of issues and priority claims. "We're using Intercept to identify claims that contribute towards our target. The DWP have said that for every change of circumstance identified from a Local Authority intervening – six – are notified by the customer. By using the Intercept Campaign Manager you can target mail shots and encourage this process which is

far more cost effective", says Ian.

Since the initial implementations of Intercept earlier this year the product has been substantially and continually enhanced in order to reflect the increasing needs of SunGard Public Sector customers to quickly resolve any identified issues. This commitment to development effort will continue as we move forward and into 2008/2009 to meet the new NI180 changes in HB/CTB new claims and change events measure (the new PM10) requirements.



“We’ve been only improving in regards to targeting the ‘right’ clients, says Ian. “At the moment, we’re trying to reach certain people we haven’t reached. This is exactly what we’re using Intercept for - identifying areas of need to help people. We’ve got 42 parishes and 300+ square miles to identify target resources to get take up. I think that’s one of the things that Local Area Agreements, assessments, and performance frameworks are going to improve upon – having targets that improve and reduce poverty,” Ian said.

Over the last few months, SunGard Public Sector we have witnessed tremendous successes across our customer base in relation to Intercept. The efficiency and effectiveness of the interventions process has been significantly improved and many local authorities have been reporting a much greater number of reductions (in some cases a 25% improvement on the hit-rate) by utilising our intelligent risk rating algorithms. Ian says, “Using Intercept, we’re making a difference. We’re helping people maximise their income and know they can come to us and expect a certain level of support – not write us and wonder if we’re ever going reply. We are proactively getting in touch with people and spending time with those who need our help or need to have their claim evaluated.”

Ian continued, “I was very pleased with the results we got from our recent satisfaction survey. We were in the top quarter with customer satisfaction. Those who filed claims were very happy with us.”

MOVING FORWARD

Wealden has been making strides to work with neighbouring authority, Lewis. Each is comparing their Aspireview local scorecards to get a better understanding of what’s happening across the many communities in each authority. Ian says, “We are learning a lot from reviewing the scorecards and it’s providing us with advantages. We’re working together and moving forward. There’s so much going on that you just want to ensure that we don’t have anyone fall through the cracks.”

“INTERCEPT HAS HELPED US IDENTIFY THE RIGHT CASES TO INTERVENE OR REVIEW; IT’S A LOT MORE EFFECTIVE. IT ALLOWS US TO SELECT OR DE-SELECT SPECIFIC GROUPS WITHIN OUR CASELOAD – AND GIVES US FLEXIBILITY TO CREATE INTELLIGENT CAMPAIGNS WHENEVER WE WANT RATHER THAN WAITING FOR THE SCAN FROM HBMS.”

Ian Nisbet, Housing Benefits Manager,
Wealden District Council

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