



## How East Durham Homes 'Fast-tracked' Their Way Out Of One Star Status And Transformed Customer Service

In July 2007, an Audit Commission assessment concluded that East Durham Homes provided a fair, one star service with uncertain prospects for improvement. For an organisation focused not only on providing quality homes, but also delivering excellent service to all, this was a wake up call and over the next two years East Durham Homes embarked on a significant transformation.

The results speak for themselves; in just two years, the Audit Commission changed their assessment of East Durham Homes to a good, two-star service with excellent prospects for improvement and stated that within East Durham Homes 'strengths now significantly outweighed weaknesses'.

This journey was far from easy, but by focusing on key areas including Accessibility and the Quality of Customer Care, East Durham Homes now have a story that they are proud to share.

Omfax are pleased to say that a key part of this transformation was the deployment of Keyfax Customer Response Management that has enabled East Durham Homes to improve and expand the way it deals with customer's interactions within their contact centre.

### Learning From Customers and Other Organisations

East Durham Homes was set up as an ALMO in April 2004 and took on responsibility for the management of the 8,600 homes and tenancies of Easington District Council.

Following the Audit Commission report in July 2007 East Durham Homes realised that significant changes had to be made in the way they engaged with and managed their customers. So they sought to find out what their customers wanted and what they could do differently.

The feedback from customers was very clear; over two thirds preferred to contact East Durham Homes by telephone. If East Durham Homes was to significantly improve customer service, then this had to start at the first point of contact - in the contact centre. East Durham Homes began to work closely with their customers to understand their service needs and how best to serve them.

On recommendation by the Audit Commission East Durham Homes also attended a Best Practice Day at Solihull Community Housing in September 2008 and then spent more time with the Solihull team understanding how they were using Keyfax CRM and Intelligent Scripting in their contact centre to deliver consistent high quality service to their customers.

"This discovery process was very important for us" said Gary Lormor, Customer Services Manager at East Durham Homes, "it enabled us to understand how other organisations provided a responsive, consistent and excellent service to their customers and how they utilised technology to do this."

Using both customer feedback and what they learned from other housing organisations, East Durham Homes set out to build the business case for having the right technology in place within their contact centre. After a comprehensive review of available solutions, East Durham Homes selected Keyfax Response Management systems from Omfex.



### Initial Selection and Implementation

East Durham Homes selected Keyfax as they felt this solution was closely aligned to the specific needs of social housing and had a proven track record within a wide range of housing organisations.

The initial project was started in January 2009 with a focus on housing repairs. The East Durham Homes and Omfex teams worked closely together and in just six months the solution went live with Keyfax Contact•View providing East Durham Homes with full contact management for their contact centre and Keyfax Inter•View providing the intelligent scripting capability.

"We found it very easy to understand and implement the Keyfax System," said Gary Lormor. "The Omfex team were excellent and quickly transferred the knowledge and understanding of the system to our people so they could build and tailor scripts in-house. This not only allowed us to hit our tight timescales, but also to continually expand and improve the system."

### User and Organisation-Wide Adoption

Since going live in June 2009 with Inter•View for housing repairs, East Durham Homes has continued to expand their use of intelligent scripting to incorporate a wide range of other services including: rents, anti-social behaviour, tenancy enforcement, estate management, tenancy management and more recently, choice-based letting.

East Durham Homes has created a true front-line for its customer contact. By incorporating all service areas into the contact centre they are not only providing a single point of call for customers, but relieving the burden on service team specialists.

This has been achieved by concentrating on the role of the contact centre in delivering a customer orientated service and involving customer service advisors together with each



service team in the development of intelligent scripts for each of the service areas. This has not only helped to break down areas of demarcation between the contact centre and each service team, it has also created a more integrated process across the front and back office. With this has come a greater ability to improve and streamline these processes quickly, effectively.

East Durham Homes has also implemented Keyfax Contact•View to provide an integrated application which logs, manages and resolves cases across departments or between individuals.

“Previously the contact centre only had the capability to send an email to another department on behalf of a resident; a very unreliable method”, continues Gary Lormor. “By introducing Keyfax Contact•View we are now able to track cases across these departments and make sure that we keep every promise made to our customers.”

#### **Project Outcome - Improving Service To Our Customers**

Keyfax has helped East Durham Homes to improve the service that it delivers to its customers in a wide range of areas including:

- **Accessibility & Quality of Service** - as noted by the Audit Commission in 2009 “Services are easy to access and East Durham Homes provides good quality advice and information. Resident satisfaction is high and improving.”
- **Consistency In Service Delivery** - with each advisor having access to the same tools and knowledge to deliver a consistent and fair service to customers.

- **Fully Joined Up Service** - with each and every interaction being logged within Keyfax Contact•View, advisors have full visibility of previous conversations, promises made and open cases enabling them to manage not just the enquiry, but the relationship.
- **Increased First Contact Resolution** - with statistics showing a significant improvement in first call resolution, now up to 89%.

#### **Project Outcome Improving Contact Centre Performance**

Keyfax has not only helped East Durham Homes improve the service that it provides to its customers, it has also assisted in improving the operational efficiency of the contact centre.

Through integrated contact management, the contact centre is better equipped to manage customer expectations and has significantly reduced calls associated with chasing open cases. In addition, the increase in first contact resolution has enabled the contact centre to increase capacity and take on additional services.

Keyfax has also helped East Durham Homes in the area of training and development of advisors; previously a significant challenge. Through the use of intelligent scripts East Durham Homes are able to ensure that all advisors have access to the most current information and are following the correct and most up-to-date process.

“In housing, things are constantly changing”, states Gary Lormor. “With Keyfax, we ensure that all of our advisors are up-to-date with technical, policy and process information. This enables us to focus training more on the softer skills associated with providing excellent customer service.”

#### **Summary**

East Durham Homes has achieved a great deal in turning a one-star rating into a two-star rating in just two years. This is demonstrated by the comments of the Audit Commission that stated “In 2007 we found that strengths and weaknesses were balanced. In 2009, we found that strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses.”

“By selecting and implementing Keyfax we have been able to dramatically improve the way we do things” said Gary Lormor. “We provide a more effective service to our customers, we resolve far more enquiries on the first call, we keep the promises we make to our customers and we have a joined-up organisation.”

“But what is more significant, we have a platform and a solution on which we can continue to make improvements; we are no longer focused on the number of calls we can handle but the quality of these calls. This allows us to continually develop the service we deliver to our customers and ensures we never stand still.”



#### **Want more information**

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