

Case Study

Northern Ireland
Housing Executive



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Public sector body finds perfect partner in BT

Challenge

Employing over 3,000 people and managing more than 100,000 properties, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is one of the province's largest public sector organisations and one of the most prestigious. It recently won the National Excellence Award at the British Quality Foundation's UK Excellence Awards, where it was the only public sector body to be nominated.

Quality of service is something the Executive addressed when it radically restructured its approach to realise the benefits of information and communications technology (ICT) and thus helped to improve the delivery of the social housing services it provides. Legacy applications and ageing infrastructure had become increasingly expensive to support and were in need of replacement.

After a competitive tender process, BT was awarded a 10-year contract to take over and manage the organisation's ICT estate, including a major revision of a number of application services. The result is a Managed Operational Service which encompasses all aspects of service and delivery support under the auspices of the Strategic ICT Services Partnership Programme.

Having a 'single' service provider with the experience and expertise to leverage the latest technologies for business advantage, the Executive is able to focus on its core business.

“Undoubtedly BT has brought a range of services and technologies to bear on the Executive's ICT needs which would have been very difficult prior to the new programme. The introduction of new technologies is helping to transform the way we 'do business' and that was a very clear objective for the partnership programme, achieved through a single supplier which allows us to maintain a keen eye on expenditure and value for money”

Maureen Taggart, Director of Personnel & Management Services NIHE

Benefits

When BT personnel were first involved in the Executive's ICT function, they embarked on an extensive portfolio of projects, ranging from root-and-branch upgrades to strategic innovations that are helping to transform the organisation and the way in which it provides services to its 'end-users' i.e. their tenants.

All user (desktop etc) devices, applications, telephony, networks, data centre services and hosting are managed by BT and initially involved consolidating and refreshing the hardware in these areas. The underlying computing capability is being established as a 'virtualised' environment in the BT Data Centre in Belfast, saving on power, adding resilience, and facilitating the faster deployment of new services.

Legacy application services were replaced by a mix of COTS products and bespoke solutions and innovative new services were developed. The implementation of a major housing application that has state-of-the-art housing administration functionality has commenced including a secure remote network connection which housing maintenance contractors use to fulfil this very necessary function. A web-based grants application service has been created to create greater efficiencies in the allocation of home improvement grants and the entire workforce now have an integrated and common view of the organisation's data via the implementation of an Electronic Document and Records Management System.

A new VoIP (Voice over IP) platform was also rolled out, and has brought particular benefits to the newly established Customer Service Units in the Executive's Area offices, helping to facilitate the Modernising Services Vision which itself dictates how the organisation will meet today's challenges to continue to provide the needs of social housing into the 21st century. Over 150 numbers were replaced with two that use geographic-based routing to direct callers to their local office.

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More recently successful implementations have included the "Supporting People" application which fulfils some of the social support obligations that the Executive hold and a Managed Print service was introduced in which BT, using Xerox, replaced 480 ageing printers with 180 networked machines, which are remotely monitored and controlled for greater efficiency. The consolidation of the estate cut costs dramatically, eliminated paper waste and reduced the carbon footprint.

Despite the scale and complexity of these changes, BT service delivery is co-ordinated at a single dedicated help desk. All expenditure is transparent and carefully controlled through

using "open book accounting". When other suppliers are used to deliver parts of services such as HP, Symantec and Orchard Information Systems Ltd, BT manages the relationship on behalf of the Executive.

"We manage large tranches of the ICT function for the Executive," said Nigel Bentley, Programme Director, of BT. "It is a complete managed service and we are a true strategic partner. We have forged very strong relationships throughout the organisation, working closely with the Executive's staff to meet their business needs by providing the best technology and most appropriate solutions that are available."

Offices worldwide

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