



CALICO HOUSING

Calico Housing Ltd is the biggest provider of affordable housing in the Burnley area with around 9,000 homes to rent. It is a not-for-profit housing association born out of the Burnley Council's housing department and tasked with providing a range of homes for those who do not want to or cannot afford to buy.

BENEFITS

Cost savings were achieved through improvements in staff working practices, increased productivity for both office based and remote staff and the reduction in support and management costs.

Calico Housing Ltd chose CNT to deliver a complete IT and Communications solution to improve productivity and efficiency by as much as £350,000 a year while still increasing customer service.

CREATING A FRESH START

Calico has 200 staff, most of whom are not office based, either because they are working in sheltered housing or they are part of the property repair and maintenance team. Calico also encourages staff to work from home when appropriate as an initiative to improve the home-work balance. Ten staff operate Calico's call centre.

In order to enable a fresh start following separation from the Council, Calico needed to:

- Take on the management of its own computing and communications solutions
- Establish a voice and data infrastructure to support the organisation
- Provide connectivity solutions to allow both home and mobile working

- Ensure customer service and responsiveness was maximised through the call centre

Paul Atkinson, Director of Finance and Corporate Services at Calico, says, "Choosing CNT and Cisco was a fairly simple process. We know that Cisco is one of the leaders in networking technology and it is a highly recognisable brand. But it was the fact that professionals in the industry advised us to use Cisco, the fact that many other similar organisations had also worked with CNT and the basic robustness of the technology which convinced us it would be the best option."

Calico deployed a converged voice and data network with a local area network at its Burnley head office and one at The Property Shop. These and other locations are linked via leased lines or broadband, depending on the need. There are around 120 PC's, most of which are laptops. Cisco wireless networking technology is also deployed so that staff in Calico's open plan office can easily move into a 'quiet room' with their laptops when required.

The intelligent communications environment incorporates Cisco CallManager to manage 120 Cisco IP handsets, 20 wireless handsets and softphones for use by home workers.

In addition, a 50-person repair team out on the road, use GPRS-enabled handheld Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and to communicate to head office.

DELIVERS SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS

Calico estimates that the improvements made by the intelligent communications environment have enabled the organisation to achieve an annual saving of £350,000. The cost savings were achieved through improvements in staff working practices, increased productivity for both office based and remote staff and the reduction in support and management costs.

Additional productivity improvements have been achieved by making the use of telephones easier. Examples include:

- Being able to call other locations as if they are extension numbers
- Automatically updated directories accessible from a handset

- Ability to hold conference calls easily with remote staff
- Ability to see instantly whether someone is available without wasting time calling them

Communications between head office and Calico's repair teams have improved so much that they have increased the number of jobs they can achieve in a day from an average of four or five to seven. Repair and maintenance requests that are received by Calico through The Property Shop, either by telephone or email, are then scheduled and sent to the appropriate person on the repair team via the Cisco network to their PDA. Information can also be sent to the PDA so that the tradesman can accurately order materials from local building suppliers.

Intelligent communications is also helping to improve customer service. More information is available about telephone use and Calico has been able to identify accurately 'peak and trough' call periods so that call centre staff can plan for peak periods and ensure all calls are dealt with effectively. It is also quicker and easier to forward calls so that callers are not left holding for long periods.

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“When we were in the Council offices, we'd work in separate offices and separate teams and we had a bit of a silo mentality. With the intelligent communications environment and our new office, we're able to work together much more and be more of a single team because we can communicate more easily and efficiently. Even those working away from head office now have a greater sense of being part of Calico because things like the telephone system make them seem as if they are in the next room.”

Paul Atkinson, Director of Finance and Corporate Services at Calico.



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