Stronger communities,
Better homes, Smarter business

Alliance Homes Group

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Background

Alliance Homes Group was established in 2006 to manage homes transferred from North Somerset Council. As a community based social enterprise, Alliance own around 6,500 properties and provide housing and housing related support to over 12,000 people 24/7. With revenues in excess of £31 million, and employing around 300 staff, Alliance is a dynamic thriving business. The group consists of three parts, Alliance Homes, which provides housing management services; Alliance Living, which provides care and support services and Alliance Ventures, which provides repairs, maintenance and green energy initiatives, including a very successful PV panel project.

Alliance Groups mission is to create hope for people and communities, through developing opportunities, tackling inequalities and **delivering service excellence.**

It can be summarised as creating hope through: Stronger Communities, Better Homes and Smarter Business.

Gordon Flack (Assistant IT Director) said "As a group we are currently investing heavily in ICT with a Business Transformation programme underway to introduce CRM and document management systems into the organisation. We felt that before the business undergoes significant change in its' ICT systems, we needed a support infrastructure capable of dealing with the changes and challenges ahead and a new service desk system was key to that".

The Challenge

Alliance Homes Group is a dynamic growing business with plans for significant growth. To accommodate the proposed growth, ICT were challenged to make strategic decisions focusing on the road ahead – the Business Transformation Programme was devised, which meant changes to our ICT Systems led to greater demand for support. Mark Collins (Infrastructure Team Manager) said "it was important for ICT to be ahead of the curve rather than left behind in the wake".

A key deliverable for success was to replace the incumbent helpdesk software. Mark said "The existing system was fundamentally a good one, but it didn't really have any real-time monitoring capabilities. It was in general both powerful and richly featured, provided you had the consultancy budget to unlock those capabilities". The total cost of ownership was significant; high consultancy fees and overhead cost forced Alliance to cease investment in the system and vendor support some 2-3 years previously. Mark went on to say "I think the final straw was the additional costs associated with us wanting to have a development and test system in-house".

A key component of any ICT function is the help desk, once the decision was taken to purchase a new system, Alliance spent several weeks

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documenting core requirements, Gordon Flack said "a key aspect for me was to identify a product that was easily configured to meet our needs, was future proof in terms of industry standards, supplied by a vendor we could work with and represent good value for money".

The Solution

Alliance tested the market by attending the Service Desk show at Earls Court and seeing for themselves many of the products available. Mark said "using our requirements specification, we produced a select group who were invited to demonstrate their product in more detail and from this, created a shortlist, who were asked to respond to a tender. The shortlisted companies conducted demonstrations to a larger group of ICT staff who would be using the software, we examined the three highest scoring solutions in greater detail and found Simplisys to be the most intuitive to use, both for end users and support personnel. The user interface, ease of use and low cost of ownership made Simplisys stand out from the rest and a final decision was taken to appoint Simplisys as our preferred supplier".

Simplisys Service Desk (formerly Citrus Service Desk) was eventually chosen for many reasons; Mark says "one of our aims was to achieve higher SLA compliance through visibility of real time statistics. The dashboard feature in Simplisys allows us to allocate calls on the basis of a technician's existing workload, which generally leads to better outcomes for newly assigned calls. Additionally, the Work Centre view can be used to see where calls are in relation to their SLA, this gives us an opportunity to employ preventative measures where they are needed, for better outcomes".

Another factor that led Alliance to Simplisys was flexibility in terms of the license models, deployment options and payment plans. Simplisys is a web based application available as a service (SaaS) and also for on-premise

installation. Alliance opted for an on premise installation supported remotely by SimpliSys staff based in Bristol.

The Result

After going through such a vigorous selection process Mark was asked if Simplisys has lived up to expectations:

How was the installation project? "The installation project was painless; we made a decision at an early stage to allow existing calls to live out their lifecycle on the legacy system. New calls of course started their life in Simplisys. This saved us a migration step and perhaps due to our size worked really well for us".

What do you think of Simplisys post Go-live? "We can't fault the responsive and friendly support, although we're waiting for some of the functionality and features to bear fruit, such as automated escalations".

Has the Support service lived up to expectations? "Yes it has, there is always someone knowledgeable at the end of the phone".

Would you recommend Simplisys to industry colleagues/friends? Yes, we would. It's a great product and great to work with.

For information on how Simplisys could help your organisation call 01275 240500 or email: sales@simplisys.co.uk

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