

## Costs

£30k for implementation plus dedicated member from income team to project manage

## How we work now/what's different?

Income team responsible for current and former rent and garage arrears. Includes legal manager and financial wellbeing. Do own court work. Patch based currently.

RAP – every week work is committed via the RAP and low level cases are automated through letters/texts – previously each officer had approx. 300 cases including low level arrears now have anything between say 40-80 cases including a visit list to review and action. This is much more manageable than before..

Officer review their patch – all updates visible through CRM/EDRM

Structure – additional savings by changing roles and less managers

## Outcomes

The combined effect of more automation to tackle smaller debts and improved support for tenants with bigger problems has seen a fall in arrears to a historically low level of just 1.97 per cent (£808,409) at the end of December 2015, compared to 2.29% in 2014 (£882,142) and 3.45% in 2013 (£1,200,082)

In 2013, we had 275 tenants owing more than £1,000 in rent. That figure has now dropped by around 17% down to the current number of 228.

Working closely with Wakefield District Housing has seen West Kent reduce its rent arrears by an estimated £400,000 in just two years. (it was estimated that the automation and creating capacity they expect could reduce current arrears in year one by 0.35% (£120,000) and 0.5% (£170,000) in year 2)

## Future

To work more proactively on former arrears cases- using improved technology

A revised direct debit system to allow more collection dates and thus more income

Review of letters/texts and to work smarter with improving technology, mobile working devices.

To keep pushing the message of tenant's responsibility to manage their tenancies and get a clear message out that we will not make non essential improvements for example for kitchens/bathrooms/front doors for those in debt.

Further training in house across the customer services teams to make sure we do not miss opportunities when a tenant calls in who may owe us money.

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## Income Protection partnership with Wakefield District Housing

### Background/Overview:

7000 homes – predominately in West Kent although growing portfolio in East of county.

In 2012 New income team created split from generic housing officers.

Rising arrears (up to 3.66% at end of 2012 was slow creep). Concerned about future impact of welfare reform measures and being prepared (bedroom tax at the time now of course; UC/benefit cap/LHA).

Conducted research into what others are doing – particularly speaking with those using Capita OpenHousing to understand where we can make any gains or efficiencies and maximise how we use the capita arrears module.

Issues were we did not tackle low debt and focussed on high arrears, work arounds the system on arrears progression rules, no clear responsibility for administration of arrears program, codes being used which didn't reflect the situation which resulted in inaction, garage tenancies were linked which created some confusion

### Scope/What we did

Following approval (use project principles as methodology through light touch documents)

WDH took lead – partnered with onsite meetings, had income member project manager as well as small steering group with regular project updates.

Main purpose of project was to:

- Improve income collection performance
- Reduce waste and paper based processes which are costly and time consuming
- Modernise and improve income management service
- Create efficient business processes and develop intelligent flexible reporting
- functionality for dynamic information

### Why Partner?

Major reason was expertise with Capita OpenHousing arrears module. Did not hold this internally and could not maximise the potential of what we had.

We were very impressed with the changes WDH have made to the Capita IBS product, and have seen their systems and that it does deliver what they have said. There was a significant amount of automation, with detailed flows and processes that work and does not produce errors that as for us resulted failure demand contact from customers.