

Case Study - Caldmore

Housing Association accesses wide range of skills

Background

Caldmore Area Housing Association Limited (CAHAL) is a community based Registered Social Landlord, committed to meeting the needs of people in the Walsall area. They are a charity and social business with a prime purpose to improve the quality of life for those they serve by offering a diverse range of housing, care and support services.

CAHAL employ approximately 170 staff and have a stock of around 1800 properties and 3 registered care homes making them the largest care and support provider in Walsall apart from the Council itself.

Chief Executive Mike Hew first met with Quiss Technology in late 2002 to discuss the potential to outsource the IT function. CAHAL were aware of Quiss Technology and the work we did with another Walsall based housing association, Beechdale Community Housing Association (BCHA) however after consultation with an independent third party, the decision was made to follow the more typical approach and develop an in-house team.

Four years on from that, CAHAL were faced with the reality that the team did not have the capability or the necessary expertise to support the growing diversity of IT needs. Mike admits that he thought an in-house team would have given them greater flexibility however the opposite was indeed the case.

CAHAL experienced excessive system downtime mainly due to a poorly designed network infrastructure which was having a serious impact on the business and the users. That coupled with an excessive amount of management time and resource being put into something that was not core business activity, CAHAL realised that a mistake had been made and that the outsourcing route would have been the best option in the first place.

They once again sought the opinion of BCHA as to the level of support they received as a result of totally

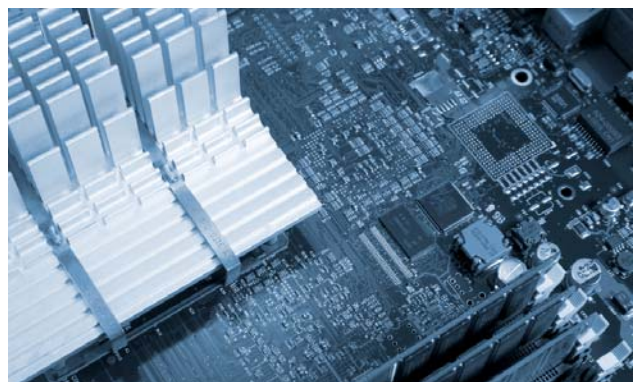
“The company now gets the support in areas it needs most, allowing the business to function as it should. We now have access to a wide range of skills with vastly reduced management involvement.”

Mike Hew - Chief Executive

outsourcing IT to Quiss and following on from those discussions, opened negotiations with Quiss and 3 other substantial providers.

Solution

One of the issues that had to be dealt with from CAHAL's perspective was the existing team and in particular one member, who was making an outstanding contribution to keeping the systems working. The agreement was that under the TUPE regulations, he would be transferred to Quiss where



he could continue his training and assist in maintaining support for the site that he knew best.

There was a need to overhaul the entire infrastructure on all sites which meant a lot of detailed planning.

Quiss provided an MPLS solution with ADSL lines out to all sites, this gave CAHAL a stable WAN infrastructure to work from. The entire hardware estate was replaced and all the relevant software applications replaced, upgraded or re-installed which included CAHAL's core applications, Universal Housing, Kypera and their Avaya telephone system.

All the work was carried out over a single weekend which meant that the business was able to continue as normal with no disruption to service to either the users or the tenants.

CAHAL staff now receives both on-site support and remote assistance through the extended hours helpdesk facility with the responsibility for the managing of all third party contracts passing to Quiss.

Mike Hew went on to say that "the company now gets the support in areas it needs most allowing the business to function as it should. We now have access to a wide range of skills with vastly reduced management involvement".

Benefits

CAHAL now have a robust and reliable IT infrastructure with far quicker problem resolution. Add to that the quality of training that the users now receive means that the business is already seeing the benefits of an outsourced solution.

“Predictability of cost in what is a fixed cost contract means there are no nasty surprises. ”
Mike Hew - Chief Executive

Mike's final comments were that "the predictability of cost in what is a fixed cost contract means there are no nasty surprises. With hindsight, I wish we had chosen Quiss's outsourcing proposition back in 2002. We would have saved ourselves a lot of heartache".

Caldmore
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