

CASE STUDY:

Torbay Council delivers savings and enhances communications with Sefas's CCM Solution



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Council's goals and challenges

In order to improve the quality of service to its citizens, whilst also delivering significant cost savings and productivity improvements, the Council wanted to:

- Leverage existing technology and infrastructure wherever possible to keep costs down
- Build greater flexibility around delivery channels
- Gain greater control over content and quicker access to information.

The authority therefore decided it needed a customer communication solution that would help meet its objectives.

- Incorrect paragraphs in Benefits Notifications often needed manual checking, out sorting and re-creation
- Unclear Benefits documentation created multiple follow up calls to the Customer Contact Centre, putting resources under pressure

Guy Millward added: "In addition, some Council Tax bills could not be archived due to cases where one bill referred to multiple properties. Our existing systems could only produce one index for each document. National Domestic Rates were also costly and time-consuming due to the multiple combinations of leaflet choice and manual checking."

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Guy Millward, Torbay Council's Pre-Press Manager, outlined some of the challenges that had to be addressed: "Torbay had been left high and dry and out of support with our previous communications solution. In order to meet our goals, and to be compliant, we needed up-to-date software and hardware. Handling Benefits Notifications and Council Tax communications is a very complex business, with over one million envelopes a year, so we had to get it right."

Specifically, the challenges that Guy Millward and his colleagues needed to address included:

- Benefits Notifications and Council Tax Bills typically went out several days apart, leading to an increase in in-bound enquiries from members of the public

Customer Background

Torbay in Devon has a unique natural coastal location, with its sandy beaches, mild climate and recreational attractions, giving rise to the nickname, 'English Riviera'. The borough is administered by the unitary authority of Torbay Council and spans the towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham.

Like many local authorities, Torbay Council was under pressure to make efficiency gains in line with the Government's Comprehensive Spending review. It identified specific areas of cost and efficiency savings, including improvements that could be made to its print and mail operations. However the authority was determined to retain an in-house customer communication ability.

Solution selected

After evaluating several suppliers, Torbay Council selected Sefas' Customer Communication suite, to help address the challenges it was facing.

The bar had been set high and the chosen solution was expected to deliver the following:

Annual Savings

- Make full use of postal discounts
- Move communication from paper to digital formats
- Use one envelope for several communications (co-mingling).

Create clear, relevant and timely communications

- Achieve better informed residents and businesses
- Reduce in-bound queries into the Council's customer contact centres
- Increase staff productivity by reducing the IT-centric requirements of delivering a communication service
- Achieve improved customer satisfaction levels
- Improve brand and messaging control and consistency.

Improve reliability and security

With existing software becoming unsupported, the Council needed to ensure that they could produce key critical documents – e.g. Council Tax bills & Benefits Notifications - reliably and with total security.

“ Following the rigorous evaluation process, it became immediately obvious that Sefas' solution could really take us forward. There wasn't anything that it couldn't handle. ”

Key components

The Council selected key components of the Sefas solution, including:

Designer which comprises four key components: composition, interactive composition, document re-engineering and production optimisation - for simple, effective management of the entire communication design process.

Producer with Automated Document factory (ADF) capabilities, Producer would enable the Council to manage and coordinate its existing production resources, automate workflow sequencing and monitor fulfilment in document-level detail. It would also enable Mailsort (postal optimisation) and document co-mingling.

HubMail Sefas' hybrid mail solution offered the Council a simple, cost-effective solution to consolidate traditional mail from any desktop application. Instead of being printed locally on desktop printers and manually processed, documents are aggregated and securely transmitted to a centralised production facility for printing, inserting and delivery.

Guy Millward added: "As well as the extensive features offered by Sefas, it was also important to us that it could be easily integrated with business tools such as CACI address validation software, to reduce postage costs, and the Civica Archive Solution to interact with the revenues and benefits data."

Key Benefits

Using Sefas CCM Solution, what benefits are Torbay Council realising? Guy Millward explained: "We can use one envelope for several communications and take advantage of reduced paper and printing costs and increased mail discounts – equating to substantial savings of over 70p per mail item. The Sefas Systems have contributed to Torbay's Printer Rationalisation Strategy which has already seen a reduction in the number of office-based printers we have from 140 to 70, and when fully implemented HubMail will make franking redundant. As well as improved staff productivity we've been able to increase customer satisfaction and have better informed residents and businesses."

He added: "With Sefas' solution, the need to print everything locally has been dramatically reduced. We can support office-based staff and home-workers, who can print from home using regional printing which is fully automated."

Cost reduction has been a key driver for the project, and further savings have been achieved by expanding Torbay's electronic delivery channels. Guy explains, "This is not only a major benefit to our council, it also helps us attract new external revenue streams."

Control and integrity of communications are vital to the council when sending out bills and statements. The ability to control and track documents from data through to delivery has enabled Torbay to be certain that document contents are complete and have been tracked and delivered to each citizen's mail box. The fully automated production process has provided additional efficiencies, through reducing manual intervention and improved production times.

"If I had to sum up the benefits Sefas' CCM solution gives to Torbay, is that we now have a cost effective, future proof document delivery system solution that delivers immediate cost savings, automated document control and electronic delivery capabilities – strengthening Torbay's strategic vision to build stronger communities."

Return on Investment and Future Plans

The cost savings made by the Council since implementing Sefas' solution are compelling. Guy Millward explained: "We estimated that cost reductions in the first year of operation were more than 15 per cent – equating to £75,000, achieved through savings in print and mail costs and improved processing. We have also been able to co-mingle Revenues and Benefits correspondence, including one big run per year in April, which saved over £37,000 in the first year."

He added: "Due to the continued budget pressures and a subsequent reduction of service budgets we have been able to maintain the integrity of the central printing service through the automation the Sefas system offers. We have a small team of designers and developers', so having the Sefas' solution enables the automation of our processes, saving time and money and reducing errors while improving business management."

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Consistency of communications has also improved, according to Guy Millward. "We have been able to improve and regulate our communications' branding across the Council through consistent and shared templates. We now have the ability to add personalised messages to citizen correspondence. So as well as this being a faster process, we can send communications faster while improving the citizen experience."

Guy Millward also cited the Council's ability to modify *ad hoc* documents which can then be processed through a central print run to not only reduce costs and improve efficiencies, but also achieve full audit control.

"We can print smarter, faster, save money and control brand and message."

The system really came into its own before the 2015 general election. "We had to print and send out half a million postal vote's, mayoral leaflets and polling cards for the election in just two weeks. It was a mammoth task, but with the Sefas solution it was much easier," he said.

Guy Millward added: "Further return on investment will be gained through extending our delivery options for council and external customers. This will include, electronic delivery of Council Tax notifications, SMS book return reminders for our libraries and Omni channel appointment reminders for our Hospitals."



Selling services

The implementation of Sefas' solution has been so successful that the Council is now able to market document communication services to local NHS care trusts and other organisations in the UK. "As far as I know we are the first authority to become an open supplier of these services to other organisations" said Guy Millward. "We have ambition to sell services to local schools, academies, to other statutory legal bodies and not-for-profits."

As for working with Sefas, Bob Clark, Executive Head of Customer Services concluded: "Sefas are very professional and have fully supported Torbay to help us deliver service improvements, drive operational efficiencies and to reduce costs. We have a great relationship."

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Bob Clark

Executive Head of Customer Services, Torbay Council

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