

New Customer Service Centre boosts service quality for Tristar Homes

London, UK, 24th September 2009. Tristar Homes, a not-for-profit company that carries out the day-to-day management and maintenance of Stockton Borough Council's housing stock, has improved customer service efficiency and is answering a higher volume of calls following the opening of a new Customer Service Centre.

Opened 1st July 2009 and located at Tristar House - the organisation's head office in Stockton - the Centre serves the needs of over 10,500 customers renting properties from the Council, and approximately 300 with leasehold properties where the Council acts as the freehold landlord. The new Centre is powered by Macfarlane CallPlus contact centre technology and Lagan Enterprise Case Management technology.

Prior to the Centre opening, customer service was handled by personnel working out of four separate offices in Stockton, Thornaby, Billingham and Stockton North – with customers being given around 20 separate telephone numbers for different services. The move to a single Customer Service Centre has also seen a move to a single 'golden' customer service number 0844 736 0007.

The Centre's 10 customer service advisors handle a broad range of customer contacts, including calls relating to:

- repairs
- general enquiries
- arrears
- choice based lettings
- anti social behaviour
- recruitment
- meeting setting

with Advisors fully trained in all call types.

A fully integrated technology system

After reviewing the technology options for its new Centre, Tristar decided to go down the same route as its partner, Stockton Borough Council, and, in late 2008, made an investment in Macfarlane CallPlus contact centre and Lagan Frontline Enterprise Case Management software.

The Macfarlane CallPlus platform provides Tristar with an extensive and robust set of contact centre applications including intelligent call handling with skills-based routing, call recording, management information, interactive voice response and computer telephony integration (CTI).

The CallPlus system is tightly integrated with the Lagan Frontline Enterprise Case Management solution, enabling called number details to be stored on the CRM system so that when customers call again from the same number, customer details can be screen-popped on Advisors' screens as calls are delivered to their desktops. The CTI function also delivers simultaneous voice and data transfer (i.e. when calls are transferred to 'back office' personnel for resolution, updated customer records are transferred to their screens at the same time). Advisors also use the Macfarlane/Lagan screenphone, a software-based system that enables users to make, receive and manage calls from within the Lagan ECM application on their desktop screens.

It is the complimentary nature of the two solutions that works particularly well for Tristar Homes according to Mandy Peacock, the company's Customer Service and Systems Manager.

She said; "It's an excellent all round solution that brings it all together. We set up the new Centre not only to improve accessibility for customers and enhance their customer experiences but also to improve the high level of consistent communications throughout the Company. The Macfarlane and Lagan systems are extremely helpful in this regard. With front and back office staff using the same systems, we're able to operate more efficiently, handling more calls, and gaining much more management information. We now have a better understanding of who is calling, how often they are calling, and why they are calling – giving us a much

improved picture of customers' needs. This improved call handling efficiency also means that our back office Estate staff have more opportunities to visit their Estates rather than sit behind their desks answering calls.”

Paul Skinner, Sales Director, Macfarlane Telesystems, added; “We are delighted to have been selected for this important project and to witness the improvements that have been made to call handling efficiency and service quality. It is an excellent example of the complimentary nature of the Macfarlane and Lagan solutions, with Tristar able to integrate front and back office functions, gain better management information, and improve efficiency to deliver improved customer experiences.”

About Tristar Homes

Set up in 2002, Tristar Homes Limited is a not-for-profit Arms Length Management Organisation that manages over 10,500 of Stockton Borough Council's housing stock. The 10 year agreement between Tristar Homes and Stockton Council is reviewed annually and sets out the resource and performance requirements of both parties. Service Areas under the responsibility of Tristar Homes include: Applications for Council Housing (including Homes to Go initiative), Repairs, Current Tenant Issues, Rent Arrears, Tenants Home Contents Insurance, Payment of Housing Debts, Leaseholders, Tenants Participation, Gas Servicing, Improvements to Council Homes, and managing Anti Social Behaviour.

About Macfarlane

Founded in 1987, Macfarlane Telesystems develops and implement open standards-based contact centre systems that lead the field in supporting multi-media contacts so that your customers can contact you in whichever way suits them, be it telephone, email, web, text, IM, picture or video message.

CallPlus manages and routes these types of contacts in a unified and intelligent way, thus ensuring optimal efficiency of operation and maximising on agent skills.

Macfarlane has established a strong position in the public sector, assisting over 80 local councils in reaching e-government targets.

Macfarlane has established business partnerships with key CRM vendors including Lagan, Northgate and Microsoft; and managed service providers such as Steria, Capita and Serco. <http://www.macfar.co.uk/>

Press enquiries:

Michael Gray

Gray Associates

Tel: +44 (0)20 8224 2315

michael@grayassociates.co.uk