FUJITSU

Case Study
Gravesham Borough Council

» This project has enabled Gravesham Borough Council to identify issues within our housing stock. Not only has this allowed us to pursue illegal tenancies but it has also provided information to prevent possible frauds occurring «

Graham Cole, Investigations Manager, Gravesham Borough Council

THE CUSTOMER

Country: United Kingdom
Industry sector: Public Sector
Founded: 1974
Website: www.gravesham.gov.uk

Gravesham
Borough Council

CHALLENGE

Gravesham Borough Council wanted to reduce fraudulent activity related to its housing stock in order to save money and ensure council housing was available to those that needed it most.

THE SOLUTION

Gravesham acted as a pilot for the Fujitsu Social Housing Analytics Service, which combines leading risk based predictive analytics along with proven data matching techniques to allow Gravesham Council to target its investigative resources effectively.

THE BENEFIT

- Gravesham was able to identify over 75 properties where the council made a range of interventions
- This resulted in the identification of £108,000 of tenancy fraud
- Interventions included eight cases in which council property needed to be repossessed, four properties that were under-occupied and twelve illegal tenancy successions

The customer

Gravesham is a local government district and borough in North West Kent, England. Its council is based at the Civic Centre in Gravesend and it has a population of over 100,000.

The challenge

Each year housing tenancy, benefit and Council Tax fraud such as false entitlement, illegal subletting, lease sell-on and unauthorised succession, cost the UK's local authorities in excess of £1.3bn. Gravesham is no exception to this and wanted to take action to reduce fraudulent activity.

"The government recently asked local councils to crack down on tenancy fraud, particularly subletting false applications and 'key selling'," explains James Flannery, Investigations Manager, Gravesham Council. *"One of the most effective ways of identifying fraudulent activity is by undertaking data matching to ensure our own data on tenants corresponds with the reality."*

Gravesham had previously used credit reference companies to analyse data, but found that this produced hundreds of results, of which too many were false positives, making the process counter-productive. Gravesham looked to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for inspiration. HMRC is a long-standing customer of Fujitsu's and has been using the company's Fraud and Error Technology with great success, saving over £200m thanks to the software's ability to identify and flag fake tax credit claims. Fujitsu itself was looking for potential customers that could help it pilot new iterations of its data analytics service.

"The Fujitsu team visited us in their search for a partner to pilot their social housing fraud and error technology software so we gladly volunteered," adds Flannery. *"We were aware of other options for data matching companies but for us the data quality was of the utmost importance. We knew with Fujitsu we would be getting highly focused results allowing us to concentrate our resources on high-risk cases. We soon saw tangible results."*

The solution

Fujitsu's Social Housing Analytics Service, in partnership with Experian, combines leading risk based predictive analytics along with proven data matching techniques to allow Gravesham Council to target its investigative resources effectively.

Initially, Fujitsu ran a kick off session with Gravesham to offer an overview of the analytics service, as well as to explain the inputs required and outputs generated. Gravesham then securely transferred an extract of approximately 5,800 tenancy records from its housing system to Fujitsu based on a standard input template. Using this data, Fujitsu combined data matching services with sophisticated data analytics to provide a high risk 'red list' for Gravesham's Fraud Investigation team.

"We provided Fujitsu with a list of people claiming a particular housing benefit or exemption, which they ran through a series of analytics models. This created a list prioritised by the level of risk represented. By cross-checking this list we could uncover fraud and recover monies owed," continues Flannery. *"Fujitsu is a great partner. It set out what was needed in terms of data and provided clear guidance on what the resulting analysis meant and how it should be interpreted."*

This risk detection service saved Gravesham's benefits investigators the time it would have taken to filter through large batches of data. It also ensured that the fraud investigation team was able to focus on inspecting high-risk properties first. The output included supporting investigation information for each high risk property such as mortality matches, or alternative traced addresses. This data was provided to Gravesham in a clear and easy to use format including a summary spreadsheet, and a case review sheet for each property.

The benefit

As a result of using Fujitsu's Social Housing Analytics Service technology, Gravesham Borough Council was able to help its investigative team to identify over 75 properties where the council made a range of interventions, from repossession of properties to re-housing, updating tenancy agreements and resolving tenancy succession issues. These interventions included eight cases in which council property needed to be repossessed, four properties that were under-occupied and twelve illegal tenancy successions.

"In one case, a tenant had moved out of the borough two years previously and had since held tenancies for two alternative properties," says Flannery. *"The tenant had withheld information from the council and unlawfully left her property to family members who were not entitled to it. We are now currently pursuing a case to recover the property."*

In another case, a mortality match highlighted a record where a named tenant had passed away six years previously. Further investigation revealed that family members had remained in the house without informing the council, this resulted in a correction of tenancy that has negated a possible illegal succession.

"The Fujitsu solution has not just allowed us to take action against tenants committing crime but, more importantly, it helps us recover properties for people that need them. We had one family in a severely overcrowded property who we were able to rehouse in a more suitable location thanks to this project," comments Flannery. *"In total we identified around £108,000 of fraud. That's money that can now be allocated elsewhere for the benefit of the community."*

Conclusion

Working with Fujitsu has enabled Gravesham to quickly and effectively identify issues that were not previously visible within its social housing stock. It has also served to highlight elements of traditional routine reviews that were not always effective and is allowing the council to act faster on fraudulent activity.

"This project has enabled Gravesham Borough Council to identify issues within our housing stock. Not only has this allowed us to pursue illegal tenancies but it has also provided information to prevent possible frauds occurring. This has helped our investigators to get on with the job of investigating. The results to date speak for themselves and we will continue to work with Fujitsu to save our tax payers' money."

About Fujitsu

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