



## Camden Council

*Driving cost-effective services by gaining a single view of how the council engages with residents*

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### Overview

#### The need

With continued pressure on local government to cut costs while maintaining service levels, Camden realised the only way to sustain savings was to harness its data to drive smarter decision-making.

#### The solution

Within just three months, Camden built a “residents’ index”, uniting information from multiple services to create a single, consistent view of residents across the borough and the council services that they are accessing.

#### The benefit

Improves collaboration and enhances data quality, enabling “right first time” services. The original proof of concept identified that preventing a single case of tenancy fraud would realise £216k of savings per annum.

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Camden contains some of the wealthiest and some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in London, and is one of the UK’s most diverse areas. Camden Council is committed to preserving this diversity while building a more equitable community, where everyone has a chance to succeed and where nobody gets left behind.

In conjunction with the council’s digital strategy, “The Camden plan” is the council’s five-year strategy for reducing inequality while preserving the social mix. At the same time, Camden – like all UK local authorities – is under constant pressure from central government to deliver significant cost savings. How can the council achieve both?

Looking at the big picture, Camden realised that neither its social objectives nor its savings targets could be met by one-off actions – it needed to find a way to drive continuous improvements in service levels, operational processes and cost-efficiency.

### Becoming more proactive

Hilary Simpson, Head of ICT Business Partnering at Camden, comments: “The key was to become more proactive. The earlier we can identify complex families, the more effectively we can help them. Reducing the amount of support they need from our services also means better results at a lower cost to the community.”

By finding a way to increase transparency about residents’ engagement with council services, Camden would be better able to identify the warning signs when residents needed more support. A more complete view of Camden residents would also help with specific areas of council operations such as fraud prevention and child protection services.

### Delivering right-first-time services

Camden also hoped to improve its operations by uniting previously siloed information and gaining a 360-degree view of how residents engage with services.

Stuart Farina, Senior Business Analyst, explains: “The Camden plan has a focus on getting service delivery right first time. If a resident has already told our housing team their phone number, they shouldn’t have to give the same information again to our parking team. Equally, we shouldn’t have to ring around internally to find information – our electoral registration team was fielding about 80 calls per day from other teams just to check residents’ details.”



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## Solution components

### Software

- IBM® InfoSphere® Master Data Management Standard Edition

### IBM Business Partners

- SCISYS
  - Entity Group
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## Finding a way forward

Camden decided to address these issues by transforming its approach to data management and creating a foundation for more analytical decision-making, as Hilary Simpson describes.

“We recognised that by linking key data from the individual datasets held by different parts of the organisation into a ‘residents’ index’, we could improve internal productivity, as well as delivering more effective services to the people of Camden. There were two main requirements: we needed a new technology platform for master data management; and we needed a data governance framework that would ensure that the data was gathered, stored, managed and accessed appropriately.”

## Selecting the right solution

After consulting with other local authorities and leading IT analysts, Camden conducted a competitive tender process that resulted in the selection and purchase of IBM InfoSphere Master Data Management, via the UK’s Government Procurement Service framework.

Stuart Farina comments: “Our end-users were involved from the very beginning of the selection process. IBM InfoSphere Master Data Management enabled us to design a one-screen solution that gives them all the information they need at a glance. We were also impressed with the software’s sophisticated security management capabilities – which were vital to ensure that only authorised users would be able to access the index.”

## Assuring sound data governance

With the IT platform selected, Camden also needed to win the support of the data-owners within its service teams.

“We performed a privacy impact assessment, which proved very valuable,” says Hilary Simpson. “It enabled us to weigh up the privacy concerns and address them during the planning stage, so when we spoke to the service teams, we were able to explain how the solution would keep their data safe and meet all the legal requirements.”

## Implementing the index

With buy-in from all of the key stakeholders, Camden worked with IBM Business Partners SCISYS and Entity Group to develop and deploy the residents’ index. The implementation itself was completed within just three months.

“Our peers from other councils literally gasp when we tell them how quickly we got this up and running,” says Stuart Farina. “It’s a testament to the positive, non-adversarial relationship we built with SCISYS and Entity Group. Equally, getting buy-in from the service teams before we started the technical implementation was absolutely vital to our success.”

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*“IBM InfoSphere Master Data Management has laid a sound foundation for analytical decision-making at both tactical and strategic levels – helping us become more proactive in meeting the needs of our residents, and delivering significant ongoing cost savings.”*

— John Jackson, CIO & Digital Strategy Lead,  
London Borough of Camden

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### Addressing privacy concerns

The index contains a tightly controlled set of data on all residents who are known to any of the council’s main services, allowing authorised users to confirm key details such as addresses and contact details, and to check which services they are accessing.

“It’s important to recognise that this really is just an index – it’s not a database of everything we know about each resident,” comments Stuart Farina. “It doesn’t contain any case-related data, so there is no risk of a user accidentally finding out any sensitive information about individual residents.

“What it does is show us which services are engaged with which residents, so we can provide a better, more joined-up service to them, and make more informed strategic decisions by looking at service usage patterns as a whole.”

### Joining data from across the organisation

John Jackson, CIO & Digital Strategy Lead, comments: “Adoption is still at an early stage, but even in its most basic form the index is extremely useful. Tasks such as checking addresses and contact details now take a few mouse-clicks, instead of several phone-calls to different teams within the council. We can also comply with requests from the police to release personal information under Section 29 of the Data Protection Act much faster, which helps them combat crime within the borough more responsively.”

The solution is also supporting strategic decision-making. Hilary Simpson explains: “During a management away-day, we helped to guide a policy discussion by matching schools and housing data and pulling it into a report within a few hours. The consultants at the away-day said they had never worked with a council that could do something like that – it usually takes days of manual work. That’s when we realised what a huge step forward this solution really is.”

Stuart Farina adds: “It’s not just the ability to match data for one-off analyses – it’s the fact that we can analyse things regularly and repeatedly with a minimum of effort, which makes it feasible to monitor trends over time and identify and address problems as and when they arise.”

### Combating fraud and realising savings

As an example, the solution is supporting the council’s anti-fraud activities. A recent Audit Commission report suggests that fraud costs UK local government organisations more than £2 billion per year.<sup>1</sup> Camden estimates that the solution could help to cut single person council tax discount fraud significantly, potentially delivering major savings. Stuart Farina and his team are working closely with the council’s services to realise the potential savings of £216,000 per case of sub-letting tenancy fraud detected, and boost revenues from uncollected parking fines.

Hilary Simpson gives an example of how the residents' index can help in such cases. "One hot topic in the local area is school admissions fraud, where people falsely claim to live close to a popular school so that their children can get a place. The index allows us to check all the addresses that a family has given to each of our services, so we can check whether there are discrepancies and assess our level of confidence that they actually live within the right catchment area. If the system raises a red flag, our audit team can investigate further – and since we have much firmer information to act on, our investigations are more likely to reach a valid conclusion."

In 2013, Camden has been able to withdraw five school places from fraudulent applicants – more than all of its neighbouring boroughs put together. Protecting local schools from this type of fraud means that places at Camden's high-performing schools are allocated fairly, and ensures that school funding is dedicated to the children of genuine local residents.

## Looking to the future

As a next step, Camden would like to establish a similar index for the data it holds on council employees. "We would love to gain a better overview of our staff – currently, data on permanent employees, agency staff and apprentices is held in different systems," says Hilary Simpson.

As a result of what has already been achieved at Camden, the council has recently been shortlisted as one of three finalists in the Government Computing Transformation Awards.

John Jackson concludes: "IBM InfoSphere Master Data Management has proven its value by helping us break down the data-silos that were preventing a joined-up approach to public services. More importantly, it has laid a sound foundation for analytical decision-making at both tactical and strategic levels – helping us become more proactive in meeting the needs of our residents, and delivering significant ongoing cost savings."

## For more information

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