

CUSTOMER
FIRST

West Lothian halves procurement costs with Customer First platform

“My view is that you get the best brains and a bespoke system that just needs to be updated once. Everyone benefits - it's the future.”

Alex Linkston,
West Lothian Council



Championing a number of local government initiatives from Scotland's national Customer First programme has helped West Lothian Council make savings of up to 50% in technology procurement.

West Lothian Council has established a strong reputation for leading electronic service delivery and modernisation in Scottish local government.

As chair of one of four Customer First programme boards, Chief Executive Alex Linkston has helped to steer the development of common IT systems that can be used across all 32 Scottish councils, avoiding duplication of effort and delivering vital efficiencies at a time of unprecedented fiscal tightening.

Key among these is Customer First's common platform for Customer Relationship Management (CRM), which allows councils to manage and track customer interactions, service requests and entitlements through a single point of contact. Eighteen Scottish councils are now using this shared system.

"We had outgrown our existing CRM system and had to upgrade it," Alex explains.

"We were one of the first councils to get involved in the development of the national CRM platform, which meant we could enjoy all the benefits and pass on our learning to other councils.

[Continued overleaf >](#)

Bottom Line Benefits

- Time and cost savings on IT procurement and support
- More and better services for customers
- Bespoke training for staff

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In association with:



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The Customer First Advantage

In the new spending context for local government, the Customer First programme helps councils to deliver:

Better quality public services
through improved collaboration and learning

Faster response
by delivering 'first time' public services

Enhanced credibility
improving perceptions of local government

Lower costs
by delivering public services more efficiently

Wider coverage
ensuring people receive the services they're entitled to



Moving to a proprietary system in collaboration with other councils saved us a lot of time and money. Basically it means we're paying for the development once but getting the use of it 18 times. It's of huge benefit and the way we should be going with all IT systems across local government."

Moving to the common platform has saved each council around 46% on the standard cost of buying, installing and maintaining a CRM system. This has saved Scottish councils £3.5m to date.

West Lothian has adopted a number of other Customer First products to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of its customer service. These include common web tools designed to help customers and customer-facing staff find information more easily. Customer First's national address gazetteer ensures the council always has the most current property details of its citizens.

The National Entitlement Card - a Customer First smartcard initiative providing access to a range of local government services - is allowing West Lothian to develop cashless catering in schools. The council is also training a number of its staff with the Customer Service Professional qualification, developed by Customer First in collaboration with Scottish councils to improve customer service skills and responsiveness in local government.

"It's very expensive for individual councils to develop their own systems, so collaboration is essential" Alex says. "My view is that you get the best brains and a bespoke system that just needs to be updated once. Everyone benefits - it's the future."

What Products?

West Lothian Council adopted and customised the following Customer First tools:

Customer Relationship Management - a customer enquiry management system that allows councils to resolve more enquiries 'first time'.

National A-Z - a set of web tools and standards providing common content, language and navigation for council websites, boosting online service delivery and efficiency.

National Gazetteer - a single database of land and property for Scotland.

National Entitlement Card - a single, customisable card and management system providing access to a range of local government services.

Customer Service Professional Qualification - a online qualification certificated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority for customer-facing staff.

Number Crunching

£30m - potential annual savings for Scottish local government by improving service delivery online and by phone

3.2m - the number of property records on the National Gazetteer

13,000 - the number of weekly calls received by a typical small council

Customer First is a £34.5m Scottish Government-backed programme to deliver more convenient and responsive public services, encourage online access to services and ensure that at least 75% of core service requests can be handled at first point of contact. It has been developed in partnership with councils, COSLA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), under the auspices of the Improvement Service.