

# The London Borough of Brent

## The Challenge

The Council's Revenue and Benefits Service is responsible for the collection of council tax from about 109,000 households and the allocation of benefits to around 32,000 homes in the borough. As a core element to council services, it is essential that both the collection of revenues and the allocation of benefits are as smooth and efficient as possible. As with all local councils, Brent is under increased pressure to reduce costs and improve efficiency by streamlining and automating processes where possible.

Brent Council relies heavily on the revenue provided from council tax to cover the cost of providing essential services to its residents such as rubbish collection, roads and parking, education, leisure services and regeneration initiatives. A team of 35 is responsible for ensuring timely collection of approximately £100 million in annual council tax revenue.

## The Solution

In 2005, Brent Council introduced Global 360's Process & Document solution as a platform for managing all document imaging, processing and workflow relating to council tax and housing benefits. This replaced its previous document management system and reduced reliance on paper-based systems. The system has been refined, developed and streamlined over the years.

"Straightforward customisation has proven to be one of the key benefits of Global 360 – the product is very flexible and malleable which means it is easy to develop and work with to suit our specific requirements," explains Paula Buckley, Head of Client Team.

"We initially implemented Global 360 to manage assessment of housing and council tax benefits and collection of council tax but a change in approach means that benefit assessments are now done face-to-face. All scanning, document storage, work allocation, work-load management and reporting for council tax; and scanning, indexing and storage for housing benefits is now handled within the system," continues Paula Buckley.



### Customer Overview

The London Borough of Brent is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse boroughs in the United Kingdom. A progressive council, Brent aims to improve services for its 270,000 residents by working with partners to deliver local priorities more effectively and achieve greater value for money from public resources.

Brent Council strives to be proactive in all aspects of IT management. It aims to make maximum use of new technology to reduce the costs of internal business processes. This in turn helps with the council's aim to ensure that all customer enquiries and requests for service are resolved at the first point of contact.

### Challenges

Streamline housing benefit and council tax services to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

### Goals

Implemented Global360 to reduce manual work-load, automate processes and improve management reporting.

### Results

Ensured smooth running of council tax and benefits services; improved efficiency, reduced cost and enhanced customer service.





### Impact on Managers

“With Global360, we have vastly improved management information. Random samples are taken for quality checking and managers have access to very good performance information on an individual basis. In addition, we can break work down into separate streams to identify whether the council tax payer is a private, council or housing association tenant for example,” says Paula Buckley.

Work is allocated automatically and managers can immediately see whether there are sufficient resources to deal with the workload. Processes to manage failed direct debit payments by BACs and reviews for the single person discount have been automated to reduce the manual work-load for employees. Plans are in place to automate further processes to deal with ‘gone aways’ and bailiff returns in the future.

“Before, much of my day was spent allocating and following up work. Now, that is all handled within Global360 – freeing up about 40 per cent of my time to concentrate on other tasks,” explains Jim Neary, Council Tax Manager.



### Impact on Participants

With approximately 450 pieces of correspondence per day and working to a five day turnaround, council tax work is automatically allocated to staff with the correct skill-set. Outstanding and urgent work is visible to all team members, helping to foster increased ownership, involvement and teamwork.

“With Global 360, we can target the work type we want to deal with first, monitor how effectively staff are working, check accuracy and quickly locate files. The system is very user-friendly and the response time very fast,” explains Jayen Patel, Recovery Manager.

All current and historical information about a particular case is stored in one place, making it easy to locate, speeding the time to resolve a query and improving overall service efficiency. “Before, everything was stored in paper format and occasionally documents were mislaid. Now, that doesn’t happen. We can search across a wide range of fields to instantly find the document we need,” continues Bhavna Pattni.



### Impact on IT

Integration with other systems is key to driving more efficiency. By 2007 Brent Council had completed integration with the council’s core revenue and benefits system – the Northgate Housing System. This has helped to reduce workload and duplication of files. Further integration projects are now underway.

“Until recently, we had to print, scan and index every email but we have now integrated Global 360 with our email system. All incoming emails from residents are imported directly into Global 360 and then allocated out as work, saving us considerable time and resources. Integration with outgoing emails will go live shortly,” explains Bhavna Pattni, Policy and Training Officer.

“With Global360 in place, our managers now have a very clear and up-to-date picture of performance. We’ve increased our ability to automate work, prioritise tasks and set and monitor targets. Managers can immediately see if any issues are starting to arise before they even become a problem.”

Paula Buckley  
Head of Client Team

### Impact on the Business

Global360 helps Brent Council to respond quickly to changing requirements both from residents in the borough and from central government. By automating processes and integrating with other core systems, Brent is running a much more efficient and effective service.

“We receive regular reports from the Department of Work and Pensions to notify us of changes to the benefit system. This information is now imported directly into Global360 where staff can see straight away whether the necessary amendment has been made on a particular file,” continues Paula Buckley.

“With Global360, we have full visibility of our workload to ensure we meet our service level agreements. Fast and easy reporting means we can quickly see and respond to the volumes, quality and accuracy of our work,” explains Jayen Patel.