

Case Study

Walsall Housing Group sets up home with OpenAccounts

Client: Walsall Housing Group

Sector: Housing Association

Project: OpenAccounts

When Walsall Housing Group (WHG) was formed from a stock transfer from Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, it needed a financial software system that would be ready from day one, and could successfully support its management of 23,000 houses in the region and ongoing regeneration work.

To meet these challenges, WHG has been using a financial software system from Advanced Business Solutions. OpenAccounts has provided WHG with the flexibility, functionality and reliability required to set up a system to go live on WHG's first day of operation, and facilitate and record the transactions of its annual turnover of approximately £53 million.

WHG is a group of not-for-profit making companies providing good quality, affordable housing for the local communities that make up Walsall. Its homes are located over five local trust areas organised within a group structure, led by Walsall Housing Trust. Its mission is 'to provide affordable, good quality, community based housing services, run for local people by trained, professional colleagues'.



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The OpenAccounts system is the bedrock of our process, and we rely on it to automate what would otherwise be an unmanageable, fragmented and laborious process.

- Hema Patel, Management Accountant

The challenge

To help deliver on this mission, at its inception it was important to WHG to set up best practice processes supported by the right technology. It needed an integrated system to support its financial processes in addition to its stores systems. Crucially, the system had to be installed in time for WHG's first day of operation in March 2003.

Computer Systems Consultant Nigel Wharton, who advised WHG on the project, commented: *"WHG needed a system that was proven in the housing arena. OpenAccounts was one of the systems that immediately sprang to mind - the system had been tried and tested by other housing associations and Advanced Business Solutions had an understanding of the requirements within the housing market sector."*

WHG considered systems from Advanced Business Solutions and Sun and, after a rigorous selection process, finally decided upon OpenAccounts.

Confidence in the solution

Dawn Pilbeam, systems developer at WHG comments: *"The OpenAccounts system was the best fit for us, in terms of functionality. We also felt confident in the people at Advanced Business Solutions. When you're buying an IT product that may last up to ten years, it's important to work with suppliers that will support you throughout the full lifecycle of the system."*

We felt we could rely on OpenAccounts, and our confidence was well founded when the implementation went as smoothly as they said it would. The system proved straightforward to implement and went ahead without any glitches."

The OpenAccounts system went live, on time, on day one of WHG's operations, and now supports the Group's invoicing and debt recovery functions, purchase order processing and payments functions, management and financial reporting functions, stores function and bank processing requirements. This includes recording income from rent collections from its thousands of tenants, the management of over 600 invoices every week and reporting to the Trust Boards on company performance.

For members of the finance team, the OpenAccounts system makes the daily and weekly pressures of the job more manageable.

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Hema Patel, management account at WHG says: *"The OpenAccounts system is the bedrock of our processes, and we rely on it to automate what would otherwise be an unmanageable, fragmented and laborious processes. With OpenAccounts, we have the information we require at our fingertips, and the visibility and control we need to manage financial processes efficiently. This allows us to spend more time to concentrate on the real 'adding value' aspects of the finance function."*

In addition to supporting financial processes, OpenAccounts is being used to support WHG's building works division in the management of its stores area. WHG is currently in the throes of a widescale regeneration project to improve its housing stock, through a programme of demolition and repair works.

WHG's building works division stores over 4000 parts, required for ongoing repair and building work. Accurate and timely stock tracking is crucial. This is made possible with the OpenAccounts' stock module, which tracks stock levels and supports stock ordering.

A joy to work with

Dawn Pilbeam concludes: *"The OpenAccounts system is instrumental to our ability to have effective stock control across such a huge volume of parts, and manages this function well. Across the finance functions, I'm delighted to say that I only ever hear good things about OpenAccounts from our management accountants. Personally, I can't speak highly enough of the team at Advanced Business Solutions and their product - they're a joy to work with."*

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About Business Solutions

Advanced Business Solutions, an Advanced Computer Software plc company, provides leading integrated business applications and services that enable public, private and third sector organisations to retain control, improve visibility and gain efficiencies whilst continually improving corporate performance. It's award-winning software systems comprise core financial management, procurement, human resource and payroll systems, integrated with a range of collaborative, document management and business intelligence solutions . It also provides managed and bureau service options.

Advanced Computer Software plc is the UK's leading supplier of software and IT services to the health, care and commercial sectors. It comprises 3 main divisions and has 7000 customers and 800 staff worldwide.

For more information

Advanced Business Solutions is a brand name of COA Solutions Ltd. registered in England, company number 03214465.

Registered office: Munro House | Portsmouth Road | Cobham | Surrey | KT11 1TF.

t: +44 (0) 08451 606 162 f: +44 (0) 1932 584 001 e: marketing@advancedcomputersoftware.com www.advancedcomputersoftware.com/abs

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