

Client: Northampton Borough Council (NBC)

Xantura product / service: 'MatchMaker' – Single View of Debt (SVOD)

Date of engagement: 2010

Client background & challenge

Northampton Borough Council (NBC) have for some time recognised that it could, through the separate recovery of individual debts, be inadvertently adding to the indebtedness of citizens by undertaking recovery action in an uncoordinated manner.

As a precursor to NBC's formulation of their corporate debt management strategy the Xantura SVOD service was considered and deemed to be an invaluable tool in supporting the strategy's implementation and supporting its key drivers of being 'fair and equitable'.

Engagement objectives and requirements

The main objectives of the SVOD exercise were:

- To undertake a data matching exercise across a number of disparate operational legacy system's data extracts. These systems included Council Tax, Housing Benefit, Housing Rents and Sundry Debts with a view to establishing a golden (unique) record for each citizen matching to an agreed match threshold;
- To understand the total indebtedness of NBCs citizens across the supplied data extracts, and;
- To summarise the matching exercise with respect to:
 - total debts (number of citizens);
 - total credits (number of citizens);
 - amount outstanding (per citizen);
 - unallocated credit amount (per citizen).

The requirements of the SVOD exercise were:

- To create the necessary output containing all cross extract data matches;
- A formatted output file containing detailed matched data, including amounts outstanding,

amounts due and a last payment date;

- A summary report outlining the number of 'golden' citizen records identified across the disparate systems along with a banded financial based breakdown of outstanding debts and credits.

Engagement delivery and primary outcome

The adoption of the Xantura 'MatchMaker' data matching engine enabled the SVOD exercise to be defined and successfully delivered over a two separate, two week periods. The exercise has been deemed highly successful.

As a result of undertaking the SVOD exercise and in conjunction with a wider improvement plan, NBC have been able to cut the percentage of inactive debt across systems from over **20% in 2009/10** to less than **9% in 2010/11** which in real terms equates to an **increase in excess of £2m which is potentially collectable.**

Collection of debts across service areas also remains on target to exceed collection in 2009/10 and ongoing work, also utilising SVOD will ensure that NBC continues to maximise income collection.

Client View

"We have been delighted with Xantura's SVOD matching capability. SVOD has been used by NBC in order to facilitate a wide range of activities. These activities aim to save time, increase collection of debts and ensure that we make every effort to ensure we recover a fair amount against debtor's total indebtedness. The ability to address the single indebtedness of a citizen, alongside summarizing debts by groups and geographic areas ensures that we can take a fair and equitable approach to collection.

The revision of policies relating to debt has been greatly enhanced by the insight gained from the SVOD exercise and the time taken to undertake a recent data cleansing exercise has been greatly reduced. On an ongoing basis we see the use of this type of view across debt as crucial in reducing inactivity in debt collection; alongside understanding the customer's true level of indebtedness to the Council.

There have been a number of tangible benefits delivered as part of the exercise and the main ones are as follows:

- Facilitated much greater insight on our debt profile in order to inform on the creation of our corporate debt policy;
- Ensuring that we treat the single indebtedness of citizens and making associated fair recovery;

- Saving time when completing a data cleansing and write off exercise;
- Tracing debtors across Council systems;
- Identification of existing areas of deprivation / high levels of debt by type;
- Assessing the emergence of new areas coming under financial stress;
- Targeting benefit take up;
- Targeting areas for debt advice / counselling services;
- Advising people of their total debt when making arrangements;
- Identifying and reactivating a significant amount of previously dormant uncollected debt.

Robin Bates, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Northampton Borough Council