



Brent
Housing Management

Arrears and Covid-19 from a Local Council Perspective: Collecting the Rent and Staying Human

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Introduction

- Responsible for 8,000 council homes, 4,000 leaseholders and approx. 1,000 in other portfolios
- Was an ALMO up until 2017 when it transitioned back into the Council
- Specialist team – 16 FTE Income Recovery Officers and 3 Team Leaders
- Collective rent roll per annum across all portfolios is £77m



Context

Problem number 1: the system

- Poor insight on rent arrears data
- Unable to integrate data sets to produce required reports
- Reliant on income officers carrying out manual checks and determining what the right course of action was and when to take it.

Problem number 2: Covid-19

- Financial worries were heightened across the tenant population
- Increase of 204 accounts falling into debt plus increasing debt for those who were already bad payers
- Prediction of £2m in arrears for the Housing Revenue Account

System overhaul

An excellent time to launch a new system!...

- We needed a system that would tell us when there was an issue at the earliest possible point
- Performance Dashboard & reporting coupled with analytics
 - Ability to see arrears by ward / patch and any changes on a daily basis
 - Oversight of tenants 'performance' and officers 'performance'
 - Ability to trend data and understand behaviours
 - Introduction of alerts when actions had been missed



1. Source is Northgate
2. Microsoft dynamics technology stack used with the mix of open source technologies
3. Power BI desktop with potential to move on PowerBI Cloud services

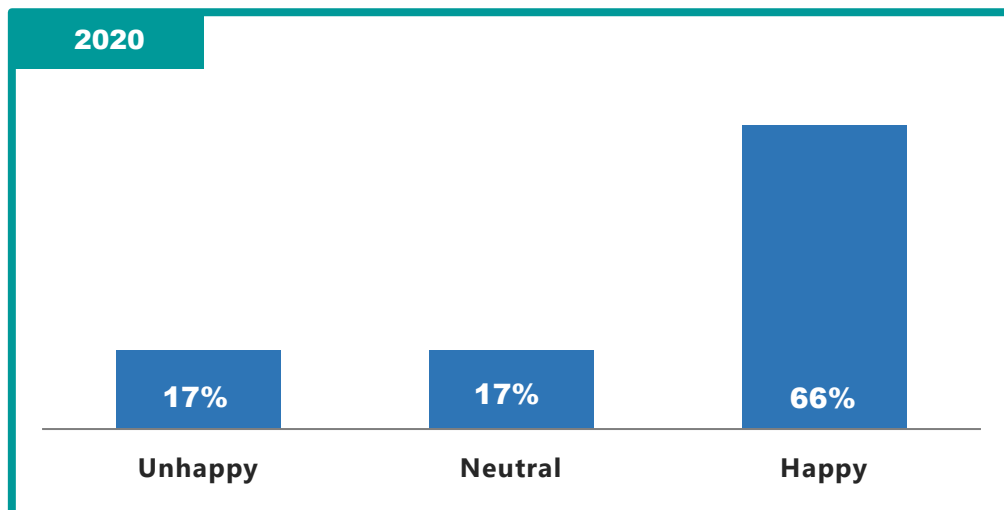
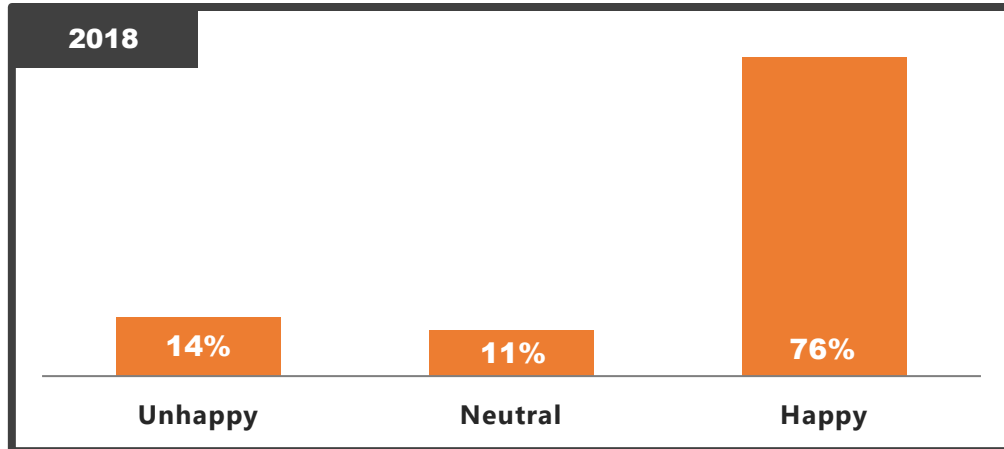
Response to Covid-19

- Ceased all enforcement letters
- Changed all comms to promote welfare assistance and where to find support including mental health
- Tracked accounts that were previously good payers
- Established the Resident Support Fund and proactively contacted tenants facing arrears

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/benefits-and-money-advice/resident-support-fund/>



Performance & Satisfaction



The charts of the left were are the recent results from the Survey of Tenants and Residents 2020 that their rent provides value for money.

The table below shows rent collection for the past 3 years for Council homes only.

| Year | % of rent owed collected |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 2020 – 2021 | 99.19% |
| 2019 – 2020 | 98.61% |
| 2018 – 2019 | 98.85% |

Reintroduction of Enforcement

- Increased joint working between the income officers and housing officers
- Prioritising actions those who were bad payers prior to the pandemic and continues to be bad payers (38 accounts) OR those who could pay and chose not to (53 accounts) = £900K as of August 2020
- Breathing Space

