## SOFTWARE HELPS GUINNESS PREPARE CUSTOMERS FOR WELFARE REFORM

As one of the country's largest housing associations, The Guinness Partnership has multiple teams working to provide support to 66,000 homes. Since 2016, Guinness has used Policy in Practice's software to help these teams work more closely together and create greater consistency across the organisation. The Lettings, Customer Accounts and Customer Support services all use the Benefit and Budgeting Calculator on the frontline to provide the best advice and support to their 140,000 customers, in preparation for Universal Credit rollout.

## 15,000 CUSTOMERS MOVING TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN NEXT 5 YEARS

When Marie Hardeman joined Guinness in 2016 three of the organisation's core services, Lettings, Customer Support and Customer Accounts, were each using different ways to track customer interactions. This structure gave little visibility over customers' data and created a lack of consistency. The data was potentially open to manipulation by customers and miscommunications across the organisation was possible, with the risk of unsuitable lettings being arranged. Customers were asked to give the same information repeatedly, creating negative experiences for them.

This inconsistency across departments, coupled with 750 customers moving to Universal Credit each month, created challenges for Guinness. They needed a solution that could record and amend data over time to give greater visibility and accessibility to multiple departments, ultimately giving them the consistency they needed.

## BETTER COMMUNICATION ACROSS TEAMS CREATES A BETTER SERVICE

Guinness wanted a tool that could help them build data around customers so they reached out to Policy in Practice. They needed something that was advanced enough to deal with ongoing changes, able to accurately log data and that could be accessed by multiple departments.

They found that the Benefit and Budgeting Calculator was the most sophisticated solution. They were attracted by its broad functionality, however, it was the Universal Credit comparison feature that impressed the most: a feature which has become vital in preparing Guinness' customers for welfare reform.

Guinness says that a co-ordinated rollout was essential for managing the cultural shift across multiple departments. As part of the launch, Policy in Practice supported the classroom based training sessions which gave much needed consistency and buy-in across the organisation.

The Lettings, Customer Accounts and Customer Support teams now work in unison to provide a cohesive service and better support to their customers. One case alone saw the tool identify that a customer was missing out on £7,000 per year, which Guinness says has been life-changing for the customer.
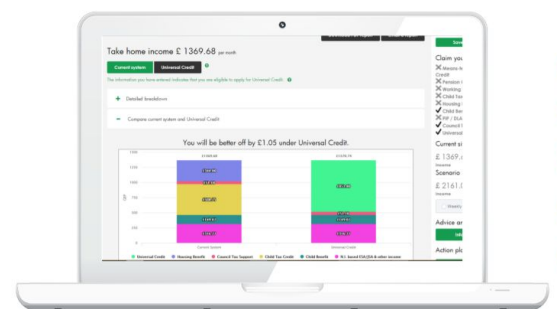


*"The Benefit and Budgeting Calculator has been fundamental in preparing our customers for Universal Credit."*

Marie Hardeman, Lettings Manager, The Guinness Partnership

# IMPROVED CONSISTENCY DELIVERS HUGE COST SAVINGS FOR GUINNESS

Guinness' Destination 2018 plan brought the organisation together in a consistent and coherent way. The strategy fundamentally redesigned the way Guinness was organised and the systems used, and it was in this context that the Benefit and Budgeting Calculator was adopted. With improved communication, departments now work better and smarter together to ensure customers are more financially resilient.

Since the launch of the plan Guinness has built 1,800 new homes, delivered £12 million of cost-savings and improved both customer and employee satisfaction year-on-year by delivering more consistent and accessible services.

With the help of the Benefit and Budgeting Calculator, Guinness has witnessed the following benefits;

- IMPROVED CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS. Customer satisfaction scores increased year-on-year (2016;76%, 2017;77%, 2018; 78%), giving clear evidence that interactions have improved.

- HUGE USAGE ON ASSESSMENTS. 56,000 assessments have been completed using the Benefit and Budgeting Calculator. 38% were new cases, compared with 62% which were ongoing. Access to more consistent data now steers these follow-up conversations in a better direction.

- HIGHER STAFF ENGAGEMENT RATES. Opportunities to improve the conversation skills of advisors were identified and addressed. Staff in the Customer Accounts department are now more confident in their work, which has been a key driver in the rising staff engagement scores in this service. (86% in 2018).

- RELIABLE EVIDENCE. In situations that resulted in court proceedings, Guinness can now use the Better-Off scenarios to provide evidence of support offered.

- BETTER LETTINGS ARRANGED. Access to more accurate data means that the Lettings service can confidently place tenants in the right home, knowing they can genuinely afford it. More sustainable arrears plans can be put in place so customers can build up credit and even pay rent in advance.

- MORE DETAILED ADVICE GIVEN. Management information captured from the 30,000 completed budget advice calculations shows how advice is linked to outcomes, such as Action Plan agreements that give customers a clear guide on managing and maximising their income.

- CUSTOMERS ARE ENGAGED AND PROACTIVE. As the process becomes more straightforward and conversations more fluid, customers are now more engaged and proactively update Guinness about changes in their circumstances. Conversations are more interactive with higher rates of self-identification by customers.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Policy in Practice works to reduce poverty by making the welfare system easier to navigate. Our analytics services help councils find relationships in data to understand the drivers of poverty. We help councils design council tax support schemes that support the most vulnerable households, now and in the future. Our award winning Benefit and Budgeting Calculator is used by over 10,000 people daily. We've promoted a data-led approach to improve the design and delivery of social policy interventions since 2013.

To see the Benefit and Budgeting Calculator in action contact Policy in Practice on 0330 088 9242, hello@policyinpractice.co.uk or visit www.policyinpractice.co.uk

**CREDIT & COLLECTIONS TECHNOLOGY AWARDS 2017**
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