

# CASE STUDY: THE PLACES FOR PEOPLE GROUP



## PLACES FOR PEOPLE SELECTS INCA SOFTWARE TO REDUCE COSTS WITH IMPROVED RENT AND MAINTENANCE PLANNING

### *The* **PLACES** *for* **PEOPLE** *Group*

The Places for People Group, the UK's largest registered housing association, has selected IBM Cognos Enterprise Planning from Inca Software, to improve the planning process and reduce costs. With over 53,000 houses to manage and maintain, and the collection of rent and processing of arrears, Places for People faces numerous variables that affect costs and revenue management. Inca's implementation of IBM Cognos Enterprise Planning will replace a cumbersome, inflexible, error-prone, time-consuming and over-complicated spreadsheet-based planning system and ensure that expenditure is minimised through meticulous resource planning.

*“ IBM Cognos Enterprise Planning will enable us to easily incorporate all of these factors into our plans, as far as 25 years in advance, so that we can efficiently align the management of expenditure with income.”*

Enterprise planning is currently being used by the central finance department and will be rolled-out to Places for People's regional managers by the end of 2003, in preparation for the 2004 planning process. Further cost cuts are expected during 2004 through a 50-75% reduction in the planning team.

Major refurbishment of housing schemes with up to 1000 houses requires careful planning. Repair work must be done quickly to minimise the loss of rental income and, in some cases, alternative housing for the tenants must be provided. Factors such as managing rent arrears further complicate the planning process, at a time when the necessity for increased visibility of the group's position is growing. With less money being distributed by central government, funds have to be raised independently, and Places for People must ensure fully accountability to its lenders. With mortgages typically arranged over 25 years and major refurbishments (e.g. roof replacement), particularly of older properties being scheduled every 15-20 years, it is vital that Places for People creates a planning system that provides the required long-term view.

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that we can efficiently align the management of expenditure with income.”, says Martin Barber, deputy head of IT and qualified management accountant, The Places for People Group.

### ENABLES US TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO THE UNEXPECTED & INCORPORATE ANY CHANGES TO OUR PLAN

The new planning application from Inca will also enable Places for People to respond quickly to the unexpected. “A particularly harsh winter may cause flood damage to property built on marshland. IBM Cognos Enterprise Planning will enable us to quickly incorporate any changes such as repairs into our plans, for an updated view of where our business is heading,” adds Barber.

The eight regional managers, each responsible for approximately 7,000 houses, are to become far more involved with the planning process, since they have the deepest knowledge of how their part of the business operates. IBM Cognos Enterprise Planning will enable them to participate in the formulation of plans over the web, whilst the finance department maintains overall control of



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the process. For the first time, what-if scenario planning will be possible. For instance, if a series of minor plumbing repairs are required within a housing scheme, cost savings will be made by planning for all the repairs to be carried out during the same visit.

## CLEAR BUSINESS UNDERSTANDING & STRAIGHT-TALKING APPROACH FROM INCA SOFTWARE

IBM Cognos Enterprise Planning from Inca was chosen by The Places for People Group after a broad and in-depth survey of the marketplace, resulting in a series of presentations from the short-listed vendors. "We were already familiar with the IBM Cognos planning product and saw it as the Rolls Royce of the market. Inca arrived to show us what they could do and within half an hour we more or less knew that this was the route we'd take. Inca clearly understood our business, and we were impressed with their straight-talking approach," says Barber.

Inca is providing Places For People with training as well as consultancy during the implementation. "We have had nothing but praise from our users for the software and the consulting," comments Barber.

"Organisations are being put under increasingly greater pressures to provide long term visibility and accountability of their business, and Inca is delighted to be supporting The Places for People



Group's vision for more efficient planning. It is encouraging to see more and more organisations adopting a participative approach to planning, as they understand that operational input generates more accurate plans, without the finance department losing control of the process." Says Ian Stone, Managing Director at Inca.

## ABOUT INCA

Inca, an Avisen Plc company, is the largest and most successful UK IBM Cognos partner, providing customers with the full suite of IBM Cognos products. Inca's professional services division is home to the most experienced performance management team in the UK, having implemented IBM Cognos solutions for over 400 companies across all industry sectors. Inca is the IBM Cognos Partner of choice for companies who want to gain a clear understanding of business performance through improved performance management processes.

For further information, visit the Inca website at [www.incasoftware.co.uk](http://www.incasoftware.co.uk)

## ABOUT THE PLACES FOR PEOPLE GROUP

The focus of The Places for People Group is to improve existing neighbourhoods and create new ones. The aim is to provide well designed mixed tenure areas which offer a range of homes for rent and sale, as well as high quality childcare facilities, job and learning opportunities and access to financial services. These services are delivered through nine subsidiary companies - six housing associations, a company which provides homes for market rent, one which builds homes for sale and a company which specialises in creating community facilities.

Places for People believes its skills and resources through a blend of specialist companies enables them to be a one-stop-shop for regeneration and a model of public-private partnership. The Group employs around 1400 people and has Group Support Centres in London, Preston and York together with 25 local offices around the country. More information can be found at [www.placesforpeople.co.uk](http://www.placesforpeople.co.uk)

