

Case Study



WESTWARD HOUSING GROUP

South West Communications Group's Data Centre provides Westward Housing Group with a totally safe, resilient and robust disaster recovery solution for its IT systems.

Westward Housing Group was formed in 2007 through the merger of Tarka Housing and Westcountry Housing. It is a regional housing association, based in Torquay, Devon, with more than 330 staff, 40 regional offices and an annual turnover approaching £20 million. Westward Housing provides more than 6,000 quality affordable homes to people throughout Devon and Cornwall.

The challenge

With increasing financial pressures and a need to ensure its IT service could cope in the event of a disaster befalling their head office, Westward Housing was seeking a cost-effective, locally-based flexible solution.

Westward Housing delivers 95 per cent of its IT services from its head office. Without this central hub, staff would not be able to conduct any IT-based work, which means that services would not be delivered to its customers, some of whom are vulnerable.

Therefore, disaster recovery and business continuity was of prime importance to Westward Housing along with every business's need to minimise costs where possible.

The solution

South West Communications Group provided Westward Housing with a combination of a leased line and co-location rack space located in its Exeter Data Centre to provide a 24-hour, seven days-a-week service, ensuring business continuity as follows;

Leased line - a circuit was installed from the South West Communication Group's Data Centre in Exeter to Westward Housing's Torquay head office. Co-location rack space was also provided in the Data Centre to host a router/firewall supplied and supported by Westward Housing. South West

Communications Group then connected a 100Mbps network connection to this router/firewall, plus an amount of Internet bandwidth for Westward Housing to use as a backup Internet leased line service for the Torquay office.

Data Centre - South West Communications Group provided an additional 40U of reserved rack space to enable Westward Housing's third party server support company (when required) to deliver two fully populated cabinets, equipped with a duplicate configuration of Westward Housing's IT system.

In the event of a disaster or system failure at Westward Housing's Torquay head office, where the server equipment is normally located, Westward Housing can now very quickly have their IT system up and running again and, equally as important, their remote users can access the systems as if they were still at head office.



The result

South West Communications Group and Westward Housing have a long-standing relationship lasting more than two decades and as the latter has grown, South West Communications Group has continued to support them to accommodate their ever-changing needs, most recently culminating in the provision of Data Centre disaster recovery services.

The reserved space in the South West Communications Group's Data Centre means that in the event of an emergency, Westward Housing's servers would simply be delivered to our Exeter headquarters where they would be housed safely and securely, so their business could continue to operate.

A test run was completed to ensure the efficiency of this solution with their network already designed and prepared to support such a disaster recovery situation. The test successfully ensured Westward Housing would be up and running within just 24 hours, which is important to a company that wants to maintain its service to its customers.

A dedicated account manager continues to guide Westward Housing on any technological changes that may improve their service in the future.

Russell Andrews, Westward Housing's group information systems manager, said:

"Although we have had hardware on cover from NDR (now known as ICM Continuity), we have never had a satisfactory arrangement for locating it. Having put the infrastructure in place and done some systems testing prior to our full test, we were pleased that the delivery of equipment, installation into the Data Centre and full testing was successful.

With the direct access to the Internet available immediately, it would mean that all existing offices could connect directly to our IT infrastructure without deterioration."