

Case study

Hartlepool Borough Council unlocks up to £750k in additional income with Civica OnDemand



Hartlepool
Borough Council

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- **£750k potential increase in annual income**
- **Huge return on investment**
- **409 financial assessment cases reviewed**

Providing the most vulnerable citizens with support for the cost of their social care remains one of the most important responsibilities for local authorities. At the same time, these costs are rising while huge financial pressures continue at every juncture for councils up and down the country.

Although there is no official national data on waiting lists for accessing social care, there are consistent reports of existing delays to all types of Adult Social Care (ASC) assessments, including annual reviews. As a result, some local authorities have a large backlog of financial assessment reviews pending, which means that citizens are often not contributing the correct amount towards their care and councils are missing out on essential income.

To tackle this challenge, Hartlepool Borough Council partnered with Civica's OnDemand Financial Assessment team to undertake a significant review of the financial assessments that

the council simply did not have the resources to manage. In a three-month period, Civica's team of experienced financial assessment officers **completed 409 overdue assessments**. This has generated a potential **increase in monthly income of over £60,000**, which could equate to around **three quarters of a million pounds over the whole financial year**.

"We were facing a difficult position where our social care assessments were not based on the most up-to-date information... Civica's model allowed us to take a more pragmatic approach to getting the job done."

Trevor Smith, Head of Commissioning for Adult Social Care, Hartlepool Borough Council



The challenge

Local authorities are required to conduct a financial assessment of every person that applies for support in paying for social care to determine how much funding the council will contribute and how much the individual can afford to pay. The Care Act 2014 advises that reviews of financial assessments should be completed every year so that funding contributions can be updated in case of any changes in circumstances. In cases where an individual is better able to afford their care, a level of funding can be paid to the local authority, while in other cases the council's contribution will be increased to ensure that the citizen receives the right level of support to match their needs.

Without conducting these annual assessments, councils will not have reliable visibility on how well funding for social care is being spent to best serve citizens, which also means potentially missing out on vital income at a time when they are already stretched. The challenge has been exasperated recently due to periods of high inflation. For example, the government's commitment to the triple lock means that state pensions have increased in line with inflation, which exceeded 2.5%. At the same time, a recent report from the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) found that 81% of councils expect to overspend their adult social care budgets in 2024/25, estimated to total around £564m.

Having struggled to recruit and retain qualified financial assessment staff, and with current staff already at capacity and working under pressure, Hartlepool Borough Council required a solution to quickly bring assessments back under control.

Trevor Smith, head of commissioning for adult social care at Hartlepool Borough Council, said: "Not only has it been really hard to recruit, but upskilling staff also takes considerable investment. Every time we went to recruit, someone else would leave or retire, so it felt like we were on a merry-go-round. All the while, we were getting no closer to reducing the backlog of assessments and losing out every week on significant income.

"We were facing a difficult position where our social care assessments were not based on the most up to date information. This not only impacts our ability to apportion budget effectively, it stretches our capacity to sustain quality services for the people of Hartlepool. To get things under control we needed to do things differently, and Civica's model allowed us to take a more pragmatic approach to getting the job done."

The solution

Civica OnDemand has experience of delivering outsourced financial assessments and other services for numerous local authorities and is included as a trusted supplier of cloud-based solutions in the government's G-Cloud 14 Framework.

A solution was created for Hartlepool Borough Council that could be quickly onboarded and seamlessly integrated into the council's systems, emulating its local policies and procedures to deliver financial assessments as a fully managed service.

To get up and running as quickly as possible, a thorough scoping and an onsite visit was completed before a team of six full-time equivalent staff received training that specifically reflected the council's requirements. Throughout the project, weekly calls were held with a dedicated account manager at Civica, while regular management reporting would keep council bosses up to date on progress.

"I was extremely impressed with Civica's OnDemand service", continued Trevor. "It was a tried and tested approach, and the team got on board with our systems very quickly. We received regular updates and fast resolution for any queries. We built up a lot of trust in the team."

The results

By clearing a backlog of 409 assessments in just three months, the council is now looking at a potential £750k in additional income generated for the year.

Keeping on top of its means testing means that the council's social care compliance is in good shape for a Care Quality Commission inspection, ensuring compliance with the Care Act 2014. By

delivering on its responsibility to assess affordability for those that require financial support for social care the council can ensure that available funding is distributed in the fairest way possible, while it also reduces the risk of falling into debt.

Trevor Smith finished: "Civica OnDemand has allowed us to manage something that had previously been unmanageable. The amount of work that the team took off us was fantastic. Knowing that this work was getting done, which would have fallen on our own staff's desks at some point, has alleviated a lot of pressure. On top of this, the significant extra income that it has potentially generated has also made this a clear economical win for us. When it delivers such tangible value and ROI, as well as benefits to our staff, we couldn't have asked for more."

The council is now considering a phase two in which more recent benefits reviews will be handed over to Civica, while there is also talk of creating a long-term partnership in which Civica can cover the onward management for these reassessments as they come around for renewal.

To know more about our OnDemand Resource:

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