# ➔ St Christopher's Fellowship rely on inbound and outbound SMS for supervision, support and maintenance.

St Christopher's Fellowship is a registered charity and housing association, providing housing and care for young people and vulnerable adults. The charity is using Text Message Server (TMS) from ProcessFlows to facilitate a private and confidential method of communication between staff and service users.

## The Customer

St Christopher's is a registered charity, founded in 1870 to provide shelter for homeless young people in London. Over the past 135 years, the charity has grown to be one of the main providers of support for abused, neglected and deprived children, young people and vulnerable adults in the capital.

This success has increasingly led to the development of projects further afield; St Christopher's Fellowship has recently taken over the running of 6 homes on the Isle of Man, and is developing other projects in Thurrock and Milton Keynes. Recent growth and diversification has resulted in turnover doubling to £13m, within the last 4 years.

## The Product

TMS is a Corporate SMS solution which enables the sending and receiving of text messages to and from mobile phones on networked PCs. The system integrates seamlessly with email and offers an inbound SMS address for each user. SMS Messages are delivered in close to real-time and recipients then have the ability to reply directly back to the desktop, speeding up the communications process and giving businesses a truly competitive edge.

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### The Challenges

Over the last decade, text messaging has grown to be one of the most popular and flexible tools of modern communication. Bruce Davison, Performance Analyst at St Christopher's began investigating providers of text messaging systems. Bruce comments *"After a thorough review of our requirements, we identified that the number and value of DDI numbers on offer from ProcessFlows was particularly suited to our organisation's need – to provide a private and confidential communication medium between our large number of staff and their service users, which was supported by the DDI methodology of Text Message Server."*

Service users – residents in St Christopher's supported housing properties or recipients of 'floating support' and personal advisory services – now use SMS to request supervision, ask questions or report maintenance issues. St Christopher's typically use text reminders for support sessions, deadlines (eg. housing benefit claims), rental payments due and to update tenants on maintenance work.

### The Benefits

Bruce comments *"Efficiency has improved. For example, service users can be reminded of meetings, saving the time and cost of missed appointments and associated travel costs. For rent reminders we have no hard evidence of*

*improvements in payment on time, but anecdotal evidence points to this."*

St Christopher's use of TMS includes using the MS Outlook functionality to send incoming texts to the email inbox of the relevant staff member and, the directing of maintenance requests to a central maintenance administrator. They also broadcast messages to groups of individuals – a specific time saving function.

The advice to any organisation evaluating an SMS solution would be *"To run a pilot in which you should try to test a variety of uses of the service and get feedback from users who are sending and receiving."* says Bruce.

ProcessFlows supplied and installed the evaluation software and gave unlimited telephone support throughout the extended trial period.

The Text Messaging Service was launched by asking service users if they would like direct access to their Personal Advisor from the convenience of their mobile phones and outlining the service, focusing on the benefits of being able to get easily in touch with their dedicated support officers. Before commencement of the initial month's trial, support officers contacted their service users individually to explain the service.

The initial trial was run for a month with 14 members of staff and about 180 service users engaging in the pilot. It emerged initially that the primary usage was as a onedirectional alert service from

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>
> Bruce Davison, Performance Analyst

staff to service users. It was noted from the pilot that it was not obvious who was sending inbound texts. In response to this, a system has been developed to manage the messages by using rules to move a text from a service user, into a folder specifically for them within MS Outlook. Correspondence relating to a service user can now be easily identified.

Steadily increased use was noted throughout the pilot, which was deemed a huge success. The system is now fully 'up and running', with 50 dedicated numbers spread across departments within St. Christopher's.

### What Next?

Bruce says *"We will be consulting service users extensively on how the service can be expanded, as this is primarily for their benefit".*

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