

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Our responsive Maintenance Service adds to mailroom productivity



The public sector spends an estimated £650 million annually on postal communications. Local authorities account for almost a third of this total, frequently relying on the physical post to communicate within their boundaries, and many are investing in modern mailroom equipment to improve productivity and cut costs, making use of advanced franking machines to maximise postal discounts. Yet, despite being part of the license agreement, the servicing and maintenance of these machines is often overlooked as a means of ensuring operational efficiency and optimising running costs.

Dudley borough is a thriving economic centre in the West Midlands, serving a local population of around 316,500. Despite boasting one of the highest superfast broadband availabilities in the UK at 95.6%, the authority relies extensively on postal services, sending up to half a million items each year, and employs an integrated mix of mail and emails to maintain 1 to 1

communications with its residents. Recently, it invested in two state-of-the-art mailing systems, TMR c3000 and TMR c2000, to print and frank mail in high resolution colour at speeds up to 310 letters per minute, at the same time centralising its mailroom operation into its main council offices in Dudley town centre.



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The Mailing Room

Case Study

With an in-house courier service picking up and delivering outgoing mail from council sites around the authority and regular dedicated Royal Mail collections from the centralised mailroom, this in-house system copes efficiently with mailing council tax demands, legal notices, rates and benefits items, electoral ballots and a thousand other postal communications. However, Dudley Council Project Manager, Richard Sharman, felt there was one serious shortcoming in the manufacturer-supplied arrangement: the lack of an effective servicing programme.

“Although I wasn’t involved in the purchase of the machines, we had signed a maintenance agreement with the manufacturer and initially everything seemed OK,” says Richard. “On closer review, however, I found we had no servicing of the machines as part of the maintenance contract. I felt we were effectively paying for nothing, and was dissatisfied with the level of service we received, especially when I tried to contact the various ‘support’ departments around the world.

“In my view, **the servicing and maintenance side is every bit as important as machine procurement** and it’s part of the standard Royal

Mail undertaking for us to have access to service call-outs, spare parts and technical know-how,” he adds.

Thus, Dudley Council chose not to extend its existing OEM service commitment and Richard Sharman contacted three Royal Mail approved suppliers to provide a service and maintenance quotation, including The Mailing Room (TMR), a fully-approved maintainer of franking machines, which offers **comprehensive cover** from online support to next-day service and machine swap-out. No response was received from one company, though the other two responded, TMR in the experienced person of its National Service Manager, Gill Dyson.

Before she prepared the proposal, Gill despatched TMR field service engineer, Chris Murray, to visit Dudley Council’s mailroom and inspect the machines to review their current condition. She then quoted for bringing both machines up to specification and providing an ongoing maintenance contract, with options of 6 or 8-hour response times and different cycle count intervals, along with issuing a full technical inspection report. Overall TMR’s quotation proved the best value and a service and maintenance contract was entered into.

Subsequently, Chris returned to clean, refit and repair Dudley Council’s machines to as-new condition. He also gave in-depth training to the existing staff in the council mailroom on the machines, to ensure the equipment was being operated and monitored effectively. One issue that arose was the authority’s use of non-authorized replacement cartridges, which can cause problems with print quality and clogging of ink jets, so TMR undertook to replace these with OEM-compatible cartridges at like-for-like prices. Under the new maintenance package, Dudley Council now buys competitively-priced inks from TMR to prevent future glitches, while TMR provides **hotline support from its head office technicians, with next-day engineer visits** if faults cannot be fixed remotely, backed by a loan machine if the faulty item has to be returned for repair, with annual servicing of both systems included in the rolling contract price.

Some time into the contract, Richard Sharman is delighted with the new maintenance cover and is happy with a central postal communications strategy, which typically delivers a better response from the local electorate than digital emailing and texting.



“As a Project Manager for Dudley Council, we are always looking to identify efficiency savings and ascertain ‘best value’, he says. “In our mailroom, we seemed to be paying a reasonable price, but we were not getting any value from the maintenance cover. Thanks to The Mailing Room, we are now obtaining best value on our maintenance package and receiving the fast, responsive technical support our busy mailroom needs.”

Richard Sharman
Project Manager, Dudley Council

If you would like to find out more about our range of products and how The Mailing Room could benefit your organisation, please get in touch.

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