

Sage Outsource Services: A payroll like no other

About Family Mosaic

Company name

Family Mosaic

Website address

www.familymosaic.co.uk

Company Profile

- A housing association based in London and Essex, Family Mosaic has 21,000 homes available for rent, supported housing or shared ownership
- It spends £200 million every year developing new homes, while also investing £45 million in existing properties
- It provides affordable homes for over 45,000 people as well as providing specialist support for over 3,000 vulnerable adults
- It employs 1,300 people, including over 1,000 care and support staff working from 8 offices in London and Essex

Solution Focus

Payroll Bureau and Personnel Software

Outsourcing Benefits

Why Outsource, according to Family Mosaic

- Controlling costs – it would be prohibitively expensive to have all the expertise, and headcount, necessary in house for a task that has peaks and troughs throughout the month
- Managing the risk – Family Mosaic has access to the extensive expertise within Sage Outsource Services to manage a very diverse and complex payroll
- Accessing payroll expertise – Sage Outsource Services has to keep up to date with all the latest developments and legislation related to running a payroll
- Ease of use – with so much data to enter Family Mosaic can focus on entering all the static data themselves and offload the complexity of entering the paper claims and running the payroll to Sage Outsource Services

As HR Manager at Family Mosaic, one of the largest affordable housing developers in the country, An Margison believes hers is a payroll like no other. “Our payroll is a living, breathing thing,” says An, “with over one thousand support staff on a wide range of different employment contracts, it’s changing all the time.”

Family Mosaic has grown rapidly over the last few years, following the merger of two housing associations in 2006, with the greatest growth coming in the area of care and support. “We work with people with a range of issues from learning disabilities, to young people leaving care, and those with drug and alcohol problems, to help them lead independent lives. Our business” continues An, “has grown as a result of our success at winning care and support contracts tendered by local authorities and the NHS, both of which are seeking to outsource their care contracts. We take on the existing staff as part of the contract.”

The organisation’s policy of honouring the employment contracts that these staff had in place with their former employers means that there is no such thing as a standard set of terms and conditions at Family Mosaic. The payroll, as a consequence, has to accommodate a wide range of different employment contracts. In addition, there is a mix of different rota patterns, with some people on fixed patterns while others have more flexible arrangements.

The complexity doesn't stop there however. "Each month we have at least five A4 lever arch files full of temporary payments for expenses, additional hours, and enhancements, which is when individuals have special arrangements," explains An, "for example if they work certain hours they will receive their basic pay plus a percentage enhancement of, say, 30%." All this information has to be entered into the payroll each month to ensure that staff are paid correctly, and that each support contract, which is treated as a cost centre, is kept within budget, "No two months are ever the same!" concludes An.

A problem shared

Family Mosaic had used an outsourced payroll solution prior to working with Sage Outsource Services, but there were a number of issues. "The payroll and personnel systems were separate, which caused inconsistency in the data, plus the old payroll supplier only provided paper outputs," explains An, "this meant we had to keep all the reports they gave us in case we needed to look back over our old data." There were also service level issues which caused problems, so why keep outsourcing?

"There is so much to do each month to run the payroll, but it tends to come in peaks and troughs, it would be difficult to justify a full time headcount for something we don't need every day of the month." says

An, "Working with Sage Outsource Services we get access to their payroll expertise at a lower cost than if we tried to do it in house." But it's not just general payroll expertise that An relies on, "The team at Sage really know our payroll, they understand what it's all about and why it's vital to our business."

Working as a team, Family Mosaic and Sage Outsource Services divide the work necessary to manage this highly complex payroll between them. Staff at Family Mosaic enter all the static data, with twenty-six staff from their HR, Payroll and Finance teams across five offices having access to the system from wherever they are, taking responsibility for entering starters and leavers, terms and conditions etc. The team at Sage enter all the paper claims (all five A4 files worth) and run the payroll. All the data is checked by a payroll officer at Family Mosaic, and it is checked again at Sage, to ensure that errors are minimised. "There are always going to be errors in a payroll this complex," according to An, "but Sage is always very responsive." With a dedicated team to support her, An is very happy with the level of support she receives from Sage. "We have several contacts at Sage, and if I can't get hold of someone straightaway, they always get back to me, and," An explains, "when we have had issues with the payroll, Sage has always handled them appropriately, and worked to resolve them to our satisfaction. We have a close working relationship, which is vital."

Looking to the future

As it plays such a major role in the business the management of the payroll is under constant review. "We always need to be thinking about the best way to manage it," says An, "currently we run two payrolls, which we are in the process of bringing together." To this end An and her team will be spending time with the Outsource Services team to come up with a joint plan of action, to manage the changeover as smoothly as possible. Having built a successful partnership with Sage Outsource Services, An has some sound advice for anyone thinking of outsourcing their payroll, "It's not just about the data, it's also about the knowledge of the payroll, you have to share both with your outsourcer." She also says that it's vital that everyone internally gets involved, especially the finance department. "If you have a good team internally and in the outsource company, as we do, then you can ensure the payroll is well managed on a day to day basis, and does what it needs to do for the business. If people understand the importance of the payroll and feel ownership over it the rewards are huge," An concludes.

An admits she sometimes dreams of having a nice simple payroll to run, but for now she has a living, breathing payroll like no other, and the team in place to manage it, both within Family Mosaic, and with the help of Sage Outsource Services.



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