

Remit Case Study: Dolphin Living

You're a London housing association with a limited budget. You want high-quality services at an affordable price. But how do you decide which property management company is best suited to your needs? Dolphin Living called on Remit for support. Here's how we helped.

Working with a London housing charity

Dolphin Living provides high-quality affordable rental homes for working Londoners on modest incomes across nine London boroughs.

The organisation's contract with its existing property manager was finishing at the end of March 2021 and Dolphin Living was looking for support to run a full tender exercise. As a charity, value for money was a concern, along with receiving high quality support and knowledge from any consultancy services.

"As a charity, we are a conscientious and involved landlord," says **Octavia Williams**, Operations and Compliance Director of Dolphin Living. "We take a great deal of care and attention in the organisations we work with, and we wanted to make sure that our property manager suited us, our values and beliefs."

Why Dolphin Living chose Remit: flexibility, support, professionalism

Dolphin Living chose Remit on the basis of a recommendation from one of their board members.

"We're a very small organisation," says **Octavia**, "so we don't always have the capacity or expertise to run this kind of project in-house."

"From the moment I first met the Remit team, they were extremely professional. They showed clear knowledge of the property sector, recognised the issues we were experiencing and showed a complete understanding of what we were looking for."

"They were also happy to flex their services to suit us, enabling us to take on some of the project ourselves. They then provided extra support when we needed it."

Starting a project in a pandemic

The project started in March 2020, just as the coronavirus pandemic hit. "**Steph Yates** and I immediately moved this work online," says **Laura Andrews**, Assistant Consultant at Remit. "In the first few weeks of lockdown, we held a number of remote workshops with **Octavia Williams** and **Olivia Harris**, Dolphin Living's CEO, to establish their project management requirements. Everyone adapted very quickly and the process worked well."

During the workshops, we used the Remit Process Model to build a specification for the property management contract. This model is widely recognised within the industry and ensures that the required scope is fully covered.



"I'd definitely recommend Remit to other charities. They have a set process and a really good mapping tool which is fantastic. They were clear with project costs, creating a menu approach for deliverables, enabling us to bring some elements in-house where required. We know that we've made the right decision and what we've got as a result of this process is absolutely worth it."

- **Octavia Williams**, Operations and Compliance Director of Dolphin Living

At the same time, Dolphin Living asked us to carry out a current service review to assess their existing property management contract, define what was happening in practice and compare the service they were receiving with the industry norm.

Octavia Williams explains why this review was so valuable for Dolphin Living. “We were trying to match our understanding and expectations with what we practically could receive from the sector. Without the help of Remit as an external consultant, we wouldn’t have had a benchmark on which to improve and evolve our service delivery. It was an essential component which we were looking for in our next property manager.”

She adds: “**Steph** was brilliant. She spent a huge amount of time with the team listening to them and understanding where they were coming from. That wealth of knowledge was abundantly clear.”

The search commences

In July 2020, **Charles Woollam**, Associate at Remit, and **Laura Andrews** started the property management tender process.

During this process, Remit:

- Helped Dolphin Living to define its requirement and prepare an updated specification;
- Recommended suitable candidates to receive the Request for Information;
- Assisted in the analysis of candidates’ responses and short-listing of candidates to receive the Request for Proposals;
- Analysed the candidates’ resource plans and fee proposals;
- Attended post-tender interviews with the shortlisted candidates.

We sent out a Request for Information (RFI) to 12 selected candidates, and four candidates were chosen to receive a Request for Proposal (RFP).

“**Charles** has a strong understanding of the property sector,” says **Octavia**. “He guided us where we should be going, but never tried to overly direct us. Throughout, he gave us the assurance that the decisions we were making were the right decisions.”



Remit delivers a plan and peace of mind

We were quick to amend our approach when everyone was working from home due to the pandemic. We kept the project on track and provided timely support and a clear working structure.

“Everything was initially planned to be face-to-face,” says **Octavia**. “So it was excellent that Remit adapted to doing everything online instead. It took a bit more time working remotely, but it was a very worthwhile and enjoyable nine months.”

“I knew that **Steph** and **Laura** were driving the project forward the whole time. Their confidence and knowledge of the sector gave me the assurance they were going to meet the project deadlines and that we would get a good appointment at the end.”

The final decision: the incumbent wins

In November 2020, three firms submitted proposals, including the incumbent property manager. Following interviews, Remit analysed each candidate’s response to the RFP and weighted the scores in various categories. In further analysis of price vs quality, the incumbent was found to offer a good quality service for an average price.

As a result, we recommended that Dolphin Living should award the property management contract to its existing supplier.

Dolphin Living started the process with a clear goal of appointing a property management company that would enable them to deliver their next three-year business strategy. This emphasises providing good service levels, affordability and innovation for customers, while focusing on improvement, safety and sustainability for homes.

Our work took the organisation through a rigorous and systematic process that challenged their thinking and made it clear what they needed, what options were available, and which supplier was the best choice.

For more information:

Remit Consulting

Steph Yates

Steph.Yates@remitconsulting.com

+44 20 7969 2738