

# Case study: West Bromwich Building Society

Application processing times are reduced with Authenticate Pro



## Background

The West Bromwich Building Society is the 8th largest in the UK, with assets over £8 billion, and the leading regionally-based building society in Birmingham and the Black Country. Serving some 600,000 members through a network of 46 branches spread predominantly across the West Midlands, Shropshire and the Welsh Borders. The Society also has a contact centre located in its head office in West Bromwich, which allows the business to enjoy a national reach. As a financial services organisation, the West Brom aims to offer competitive value-for-money savings and mortgage products, and prides itself on providing friendly and professional customer service.



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**Peter Collingridge  
Head of IT  
West Bromwich Building Society**

## Situation

When customers open a new account with the West Brom, they have to provide proof of identity. This is part of the due diligence required by the Financial Services Authority, which all financial services organisations have to undertake in order to reduce the risk of money laundering and fraud.

There are two types of identity verification that organisations can adopt. Paper-based authentication, which relies on documentation such as passports and driving licences, and electronic authentication, where a combination of data sources and scoring is deployed. The West Brom had recognised that electronic authentication gives a more efficient and customer friendly approach, and was already using an authentication solution in its contact centre to process postal account applications.

With all electronic authentication solutions presently on the market, there is an effort to ascertain a minimum number of records, or ‘matches’, against an individual and their age. How many times can you, for instance, find Mr John Smith at his stated address with the right age? The more data held by the data provider, the greater the likelihood that you’ll be able to generate a positive ID.

The West Brom processes more than 1,000 postal account applications per day. One of the major challenges for their previous electronic system was the ability to hold enough data. Customers that couldn’t be matched against the solution had to be asked for paper proof of identity, thereby delaying the application process and increasing processing times and costs.

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### Results

After running a series of trials, the West Brom selected Authenticate Pro from Experian, resulting in improved customer service as their applications could be processed straightaway. Accordingly, the West Brom achieved efficiency improvements because they did not need to request paper ID or check and scan the paper ID.

Now, when contact centre agents are processing new applications, they can be confident that the majority can be processed through Authenticate Pro.

The software compares the data contained in the applications, such as name, address, date of birth, and previous address, with the 1 billion records that Experian holds to verify the identity of consumers. It looks at the number of electronic records the individual can be matched against, how far back in time they go and the processes that were in place when the records were initially created.

The data is then analysed to identify potential fraudsters or high risk individuals. An authentication decision (Yes, No or Refer) is then given in seconds, with no need for paper-based proof of identity, such as a passport or driving licence.

Peter Collingridge, Head of IT at the West Bromwich Building Society, comments: "Authenticate Pro was straightforward to install and has helped us improve the efficiency of our account opening process. This is good news for us because it reduces our costs but, importantly, it's also good news for our customers as we are able to process their applications quicker. It therefore means very few of our customers now need to send us paper forms of ID."

### Future plans

The West Brom has been sufficiently impressed with Experian's authentication solution that it is now looking to extend its use of Authenticate Pro to online account applications.

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