

## case study



## OPTI-TIME helps Brent Housing Partnership save £1.25 million in their repairs and maintenance function

Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) looks after 13,600 council properties in Brent. Like most housing organisations, one of the major challenges they face is to provide their tenants with an efficient and effective repairs service in the most cost effective way possible.



***“OPTI-TIME is the backbone of the repairs service and has been a hard-core improvement saving BHP £1.25 million.”***

Umesh Natalia, Head of Responsive Repairs, BHP

### The Challenge:

In 2008, Umesh Natalia, Head of Responsive Repairs at BHP noticed things in the repairs business weren't working as efficiently as they should have been and wanted to make changes. For example, the contact centre was receiving 8,000 calls a month of which approximately half were complaints from tenants who hadn't had the work carried out that was promised, or the work had been started, but not completed.



### Understanding the Issues:

To rectify this, BHP had a consultation with Vanguard and based on their recommendation, began to implement the “Lean Fundamental Approach” where, along with their repairs contractor Linbrook Services, they would take their repairs service back to basics and review all their processes and procedures in detail in the hope of making the service better.

Supervisors began to drive around with the operatives to see how things were working. At this time, operatives were given between 8-10 appointments per day to complete. The

supervisors quickly noticed that after just 2-3 appointments, the operatives were unable to make the rest of the repairs appointments that were made weeks in advance. It quickly became clear why so many complaint calls were coming into the contact centre. The operatives simply did not have enough time to complete all of their jobs.

### The Solution:

BHP stopped using their housing management system and began to do everything manually. With the help of a whiteboard, jobs were written down on the board and assigned to operatives one at a time. When the operative finished the job, he would phone in and the team would give him his next job. This was an arduous process, however it helped Umesh and his team realise how much more effective it was to provide operatives with one job at a time, as opposed to batches of jobs. It was less stressful on the operatives and appointments that were made, were actually being kept, which was improving the customer service experience.

Umesh expanded the amount of people working in this way when he took this manual



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one job at a time approach to the borough. It was a complicated, but effective way to work and although not feasible in the long run, it helped cement the idea that one job at a time was the way to move forward. To that end, it was identified that the Xmbrace OPTI-TIME system was what BHP needed to automate the one job at a time approach. In October 2010, the OPTI-TIME appointment booking and workforce scheduling solution was implemented and rolled out.

### The Outcome:

BHP has seen a dramatic savings in cost overhead with their repairs partner, Linbrook Services. The Linbrook team working on the BHP account have gone from 53 operatives down to 29 doing the same work and the administrative staff reduced from 36 to 14 members. The efficiencies and cost savings continue as BHP has seen a reduction in required call centre staff from 17 to 12.

“OPTI-TIME has given us the ability to track jobs in real-time and has reduced our number of missed appointments. OPTI-TIME is the backbone of the repairs service and has been a hard-core improvement saving BHP £1.25 million.” said Umesh Natalia.

The benefits of OPTI-TIME are more far-reaching than costs alone. Operatives are much happier as before the one job at a time approach, they were under constant pressure with an unrealistic workload. Now they are able to work in a more controlled way and can

do the work to a better standard rather than having to rush through each job. Also, the contact centre has seen a reduction in incoming calls from 8,000 down to 5,000 and with staff taking far fewer complaint calls, it has resulted in happier, healthier staff who are taking far less sick leave due to stress.

BHP has been on a three year journey so far, concentrating on making efficiencies to every part of their repairs service. To this end, they ensure that vans are stocked with all needed supplies, supervisors are in the field helping to make sure everything goes smoothly and PDAs and text messaging have been introduced.



In 2008, before the Lean Fundamental Check, a sample of 100 jobs was measured across several different trades to see what the end to end times were. At the time, it took 100 days on average from start through to completion. In October 2010, after OPTI-TIME was implemented, another sample of 100 jobs was measured and the start to finish times went down to a staggering 6.32 days.

Gerry Doherty, Chief Executive at BHP said “In the 18-19 years in business, BHP has never seen such a significant change. The technology is more advanced than ever, our staff are happier and healthier and we have seen a very significant cost savings across the entire repairs service through all the changes we have made.”

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