

## case study



## Repair Appointments Kept from 21.6% to 100% - OPTI-TIME - Transforming The Way Cheshire West and Chester Council Handle Repairs

Cheshire West and Chester Council, Housing Management Services manage 5,600 residential properties and provide a range of services to their residents including repair management, an extensive improvement programme and housing aids and adaptations.



Through the use of OPTI-TIME, the results at the council have been immediate. The difference in statistics from April 2010 to February 2011 is impressive:

- Appointments kept from 21.6% to 100%
- Routine Repairs completed from 72.54% to 100%
- Urgent Repairs completed from 87.90% to 98.18%
- Emergency Repairs completed from 95.48% to 97.63%

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As part of a mock inspection by HQN (Housing Quality Network) in 2009 it was revealed that the way in which the council handled repair requests by residents was not working effectively – residents were content with the quality of service, but repairs were often delayed and incomplete. In fact during 2009/2010 only 76% of routine repairs were being carried out to set targets and deadlines, with the service unable to offer residents appointments for most repairs. This and other results provided a catalyst for a new service improvement plan across the housing department and in particular, a solution to manage the repairs system and provide a better service to residents.

Cheshire West and Chester contacted Xmbrace about their product, OPTI-TIME, an appointment scheduling and workforce management solution that could provide the answer to their repair management issues. Cheshire West and Chester went live in September 2010 with OPTI-TIME Version 5, a browser-based application of OPTI-TIME accessible from any computer within their network.

Karen Craig, Business Development and Performance Manager at Cheshire West and Chester Council explains, “The integration of OPTI-TIME into our current Consilium system went really well with both parties working together to control costs and ensure that all

our requirements were met. There were a number of challenges along the way, but Xmbrace certainly impressed us with how they coped with these.”

Cheshire West and Chester were not able to implement mobile working at this time, but rather than compromise Keira Vogel, Responsive Repairs Manager, did something quite unusual and manually undertook the philosophy of one job at a time.

Through the implementation of OPTI-TIME the process of reporting repairs has been simplified and improved beyond recognition. A resident logs a repair, be it routine or an emergency, with the contact centre. Once the repair is logged on the housing management system, an appointment is made using OPTI-TIME. The contact centre planner contacts the repairs operative the night before to inform him/her of their first job.



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Once the first job is carried out, the operative rings the planner who manually updates OPTI-TIME and the back office system with the SOR's and materials used ensuring that everyone involved has improved visibility of the works being carried out and the next job is released. Any specific issue relating to the tenant or property, such as an occupant having difficulty getting to the door or the potential presence of asbestos in the projected area of work within the property, is relayed to the operative before proceeding. Through the use of OPTI-TIME, the results at the council have been immediate with any backlog of work cleared within weeks and repair response times greatly improved. The difference in statistics from April 2010 to February 2011 is impressive:

- **Appointments kept from 21.6% to 100%**
- **Routine Repairs completed from 72.54% to 100%**
- **Urgent Repairs completed from 87.90% to 98.18%**
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The council is now able to give residents a clear idea of when their appointments have been arranged for. Instead of simply indicating that an operative will be with a resident either AM or PM on any working day within the target date they can now be told if someone is coming to see them on a particular day and time slot, eg morning, afternoon, all day, avoid school run. In addition, through the use of OPTI-TIME, residents are now sent a text message confirming their appointment and a reminder the day before, helping to ensure that they are in when the operative visits.

When asked how the council found working with Xmbrace Karen Craig said, "We found that throughout the implementation, Xmbrace had a great can-do attitude to any challenge that would arise. They were very responsive to any questions or queries we had and supported us throughout every stage of the process. Our working relationship is now better than ever."

Looking ahead, Cheshire West and Chester council hope to implement mobile working in the near future. Through the introduction of mobile working there will be no need to manually input into the system and operatives can be sent their jobs automatically through a PDA or other mobile device. The council will look to extend the OPTI-TIME system to include voids and planning, and could even be rolled out to wardens, first tenancy and area housing officers home visits in the future.

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