

case study



Newport City Homes see 40% reduction in no access after just one month

Newport City Council, which covers 74 square miles of Welsh countryside, provides all major services such as education, leisure, housing, social services, planning and highways.

In order to deliver the best possible service to their residents, and as a result of the resounding yes vote on transfer, the council agreed to transfer management of its housing stock to Newport City Homes (NCH) an independent housing association, on March 9th 2009. NCH was tasked with improving service to the over 9,000 residents.

other new technology would need to be put in place in order to fulfill the strategic goals of the organisation. They knew that streamlining their processes in the back office would translate to better service for their residents. Within a matter of months, they had in place, one upgraded and two brand new IT systems.

NCH upgraded its existing ROCC back end system to the latest, web-based version and following ROCC's recommendation, the organisation implemented Xmbrace's OPTI-TIME appointment booking and workforce scheduling solution as well as the 1st Touch mobile system.



NCH provides a range of services including maintenance, repairs, antisocial behaviour support and specialist financial advice. They actively seek input from residents, with over 150 actively involved in the work of the organisation, from helping to develop policies and procedures, to interviewing for new vacancies and participating in panels, groups and forums.

When NCH was created, the management team understood that the current IT infrastructure needed to be upgraded and



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Neil Jones
Head of IS, NCH

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NCH took the opportunity to change their own back office processes whilst the new technology was being implemented. One of these changes included creating the new post of work planner, who manages the work of the trades team online using OPTI-TIME, which optimises travel and makes sure the best resource is sent to each job. The work planners replaced the arduous role of printing out tickets and hand delivering them to each trades team every day. With work now being automatically scheduled by OPTI-TIME, the supervisors now have more time to do their other tasks and NCH has an aligned process with the planners being used where “human intervention” is needed.



The project took just six months from start to finish and went very smoothly. NCH saw the trades team as an integral part of the process, keeping them informed by regular meetings, workshops and updates.

Speaking about the OPTI-TIME appointment booking and workforce scheduling solution, Neil Jones, Head of IS at NCH, said: “the implementation has provided us with the ability for our trades team to know exactly

where they are going before leaving their own homes. They no longer have to come into the office to pick up job sheets, which helps to improve their efficiency.”

Another service improvement that NCH has been able to introduce, thanks to OPTI-TIME, is text messaging to residents who are sent a text alert when a tradesman is on their way to carry out a repair at their home. This measure has helped to reduce the amount of “no access” visits previously experienced. Neil shared a story recently told to him by one of the trades team:

‘He pulled up at his next appointment and was about to knock on the door when a lady came running up the street. Out of breath, she said she had just gone shopping up the road, received the text message and ran back from the shop for her appointment.’

According to Neil, NCH is already experiencing the benefits of the systems: “In the five weeks since we went live, figures are already showing a 40% reduction in no access. This is a brilliant improvement.”

When asked what he thought about the service he received from Xmbrace and their OPTI-TIME implementation, Neil said: “The Xmbrace team was very helpful and knowledgeable. They were more than willing to listen to what we were asking for, go away and then design exactly what we wanted. They were also there to review the system as it went live, just in case anything went amiss. Overall, I was very pleased with the service.”

NCH is now entering phase two of the project, where they will take the opportunity to review successes and see if they can leverage and extend these to other processes.

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