



## CBS - Mobilising Building Maintenance

How CBS has utilised mobile working to drive productivity improvements and create a truly mobile workforce servicing tenants from Newcastle to Plymouth



**Community Building Services (CBS) Ltd provides a comprehensive range of high quality building and maintenance services delivered by a team of directly employed and locally recruited trade operatives. A wholly-owned subsidiary of William Sutton Homes, CBS is part of Affinity Sutton, which is one of the largest housing groups in the UK. Their call centre provides building services to members of the group, as well as to other housing associations and local authorities across the country, resulting in over 145,000 customer calls every year.**

#### Drivers For Mobilisation

CBS operates as the in-house maintenance arm for the Affinity Sutton Group. As an expanding organisation, CBS was looking to migrate its workforce from being estate-based to being truly mobile and utilising regional operatives over multiple estates. To achieve this, CBS realised they would have to centralise the customer contact point, implement an effective scheduling system and use mobile applications to link operatives to the call centre.

Before making the decision to implement mobile working, CBS relied upon paper-based work orders. This system could produce up to twelve copies of each piece of paperwork for every job across the organisation.

The excessive amount of paperwork was not only wasteful, but very inefficient and did not provide the managers or supervisors with any timely insight as to what was going on in the field.

CBS's goals were to drive productivity in the field through mobilising its workforce, ensuring that tenants received the service they required through a seamless process from contact centre to operative completing work, and to put in place a mobile working platform that would enable CBS to continually improve both the quality and efficiencies in this service to their tenants.

#### Why Pervasic?

CBS conducted an extensive review of the market but found only two organisations that had proven and demonstrable mobile working solutions in the field. Of the two, Pervasic was the only one with a truly flexible solution. Whereas CBS wanted an application that had been tried and tested, they did not want to be restricted by a rigid application; with Pervasic, they received a proven, pre-built application that could be adapted and tailored to meet their own specific requirements with the ability to add new elements at a later date.

"We found Pervasic's solution to be very flexible. We were able to take a foundation application and not only tailor this for our own specific needs, but continually build on this foundation to extend the scope and benefits of mobile working within CBS," said Nigel Balaam, Business Services Director, CBS.



### Implementation:

After choosing the Pervasic MobileOne® Accelerator Housing Maintenance application the project was kicked off with a series of workshops. “Pervasic walked us through every element of their application and we decided on which forms had to be adjusted to our specific requirements and what new forms were needed,” said Nigel, “this approach worked very well; we provided the understanding of our business and Pervasic provided the expertise of mobilisation and how best to set-up mobile applications.”

As standard, Pervasic’s MobileOne® Accelerator Housing Maintenance application provided integration into the OPTI-TIME scheduling system that CBS used. Also with the standards-based gateways provided by the MobileOne® Platform CBS was quickly able to integrate their mobile application into their existing housing maintenance system. A staggered approach was used to roll the solution out into the field. This was done six operatives at a time. Each group was given a one hour training course in the office and then were given time to use the system over a couple of days to become familiar with it. By the end of the week, those operatives went live on the system and the process repeated for the next set of operatives.

“Overall the system has been adopted by the operatives very well”, said Nigel, “training time has been minimal and we have had very few user issues in the field.”

### How Does It Work?

When a CBS tenant has a repair requirement, they call the one contact centre in Borehamwood and are allocated an appointment within the OPTI-TIME scheduling system. OPTI-TIME then passes the appointments through to the Pervasic MobileOne® Accelerator Housing Maintenance application that transmits these to the operatives’ PDA, providing them with their daily jobs.

When operatives log into the system in the morning, they are first required to complete a set of health and safety questions to ensure that both they and their vehicles are fit for the day ahead. Upon completing this, they are provided with a set of jobs.

The operatives accept their first assignments, continue to their job and then update their status when they arrive on site. They then complete a risk assessment form on their PDA which determines if they can complete the work specified and have all of the tools and safety equipment to undertake the specified work.

Once the work is completed, the operatives use their PDA to fill in any details needed regarding the job, adjusting the job costing if appropriate and then updating the status to complete the job. They are then ready to go to their next job.

All of the information put into the PDAs is transmitted back to the office in real time, allowing the supervisors to know exactly where the operatives are and the status of works at all times. Back at the office, a large screen shows managers and supervisors the location of each operative, the job they are working on and the status of all jobs, whether they are pending, in process or completed.

The project initially kicked off with 40 operatives and now has over 100 operatives using the mobile working solution. Nigel said “If we went back to paper tomorrow, I am sure there would be a mutiny.” He continues “Other teams are now pressing us for mobile working, we are currently looking to roll the solution out to our Voids and MOT (annual health check) teams.”

This project has also enabled us to successfully migrate from our estate-based approach to the new centralised model. At the outset, this new system encountered opposition from many of the tenants who worried about the change. “There were a lot of tenants that were resistant to us moving from our estate-based model to a centralised contact centre and mobile working,” Nigel states. “Now they have seen the improvement in service levels we are providing them and they are happy; they have now turned full circle,” finishes Nigel.

## Benefits

CBS has seen many improvements to their business since the introduction of mobile working. Productivity has improved significantly and travelling time between jobs has been reduced. More jobs are completed per day as operatives no longer waste time filling in paperwork. The amount of paper used has been significantly reduced and they have become more efficient in the scheduling of work.

Real-time information gives managers and supervisors insight into exactly what is happening in the field which enables them to better manage their business. They are now able to comfortably control their very large customer-base which spans from Newcastle in the North-East through to Plymouth in South-West.

CBS has also seen a significant increase in the number of first time fixes and an improvement in the number of appointments kept.

“By implementing mobile working and moving to a truly mobile workforce CBS has been able to gain the benefits of increased productivity and this has enabled us to optimise our field-based workforce by over 40 full-time employees”, said Nigel.

CBS is now in the process of implementing automated van stock replenishment with Pervasic and the MobileOne® Accelerator Housing Maintenance solution. With this application, operatives will keep up to date stock levels on their van by recording stock usage on their PDA. When stock levels fall below a certain level then an automatic replenishment order will be produced.

“This offers CBS some significant benefits. By managing our purchasing in this manner we are able to use our collective purchasing power with one supplier achieving better value for money. Secondly, we will be able to optimise our van stock, ensuring that operatives always have what they need to complete work while also ensuring stock levels are efficient,” Nigel stated.

**“Pervasic’s MobileOne® Accelerator Housing Maintenance solution has definitely helped us achieve the goals of this project and much more,” concludes Nigel, “I feel we are providing our tenants a better service while also having in place the technology that enables us to drive efficiency and effectiveness in our business, both now and in the future.”**

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