

South Lakes Housing improves homes and services for tenants



Integrated housing and asset management systems underpin customer service and performance improvements at a Cumbrian housing association.

Keeping promises made to tenants

When South Lakes Housing (SLH) took over management of more than 3,000 homes from South Lakeland District Council, it promised to bring all of them up to the Decent Homes Standard. SLH delivered on that promise in March 2017, following a £54m improvement programme over five years.

"As well as improving homes, we promised to improve customer service for our tenants," says Paul Aitken, IT Manager at South Lakes. When tenants rang up, they were often passed around departments, or had to wait for a call back. "It was frustrating for tenants and inefficient for us," says Aitken.

SLH decided to set up a customer services team to answer more enquiries at first point of contact. To enable the team to access supporting information, SLH looked for a customer relationship management (CRM) solution that would integrate with SLH's housing management system.

"Now that we've integrated Civica's Cx and Keystone solutions, our customer service team can see and do more using fewer systems, and be confident they're giving tenants accurate, up-to-date information."

Paul Aitken, IT Manager, South Lakes Housing

Outcomes

- ▶ A 360° view of tenants and properties through integration of Civica solutions for housing and asset management
- ▶ More efficient handling of tenant enquiries and requests enabled by consolidated information sources and slicker processes
- ▶ Time savings of around a day a week for tenancy management officers using mobile technology
- ▶ Projected annual savings of £25,000 by replacing letters with electronic communications and providing a self-service portal for tenants.

3,000+
property asset records



100%
target rent collection rate



£25,000
projected annual savings from
implementing digital communications



Integrating Civica Cx and Keystone helps SLH save time and money, improve business processes, and manage tenant and property information more effectively.



A 360° view of tenants and properties

Soon realising that integrating SLH's housing management system with a CRM solution would be both challenging and costly, the SLH Project Team changed tack, and started looking for a replacement housing management solution with built-in CRM capability. **"Civica Cx fitted the bill perfectly,"** Paul says. **"It gives our customer service staff the all-round view of tenant and property information that enables them to handle most requests and enquiries during the initial call."**

Among those calls are repair requests — around 13,000 a year. They're now handled much faster than before, as staff can log requests and give out appointments with no need to switch to a separate scheduling system. **"Doing everything in Cx saves a couple of minutes per call, so we can handle more requests each week,"** says Paul. And because staff can see each tenant's full history, they can cover other topics during the call, such as rent arrears.

Cx supports other SLH users, too. Its 20 tenancy management officers, income officers and customer service staff can review tenant and property data on their mobile devices during inspections, and add new information and photos on the spot. **"Cx's mobile working capability means they don't have to travel back to the office to update the data."**

Deeper integration, improved service levels

Although implementing Civica Cx delivered significant benefits, SLH wanted to go further. As well as being dissatisfied with the data reliability of SLH's asset management system, he knew it was inefficient to continue using separate systems for tasks like boiler service scheduling.

As a next step, SLH implemented Civica Keystone — a comprehensive asset management solution with modules ranging from equipment servicing and inspections to fire risk management — and integrated it with Cx. Information held in Keystone, such as scheduled servicing dates, can be accessed directly from Cx.

"Now that we've integrated Keystone with Cx, our customer service team can see and do more using fewer systems, and be confident they're giving tenants accurate, up-to-date information," says Paul.

Towards a more digital organisation

SLH is now increasing its use of digital communications, aiming to save around half of its £50,000 annual spend on print and post. Using Cx's interactive tenant portal they will publish rent statements, arrears notices and repair appointments, alerting tenants by email or text. Using Cx, SLH has also automated the dispatch of rent statements to the council, saving around 45 minutes each week on data collation.

Civica Cx works seamlessly with a range of other systems in use at SLH, including finance systems and payment platforms. It's also integrated with Civica Abritas — the choice-based lettings system used by SLH — so information applicants enter into Abritas transfers automatically to Cx when they become SLH tenants.

"Our integrated Civica solutions are helping us deliver great customer service, with the latest results showing that we rank higher than both, the UK Customer Satisfaction index and Housing Association average."

SLH is now trialling Cx's predictive analytics to reduce rent arrears. The organisation aims to increase collection rates to 100%, while saving almost £30,000 on annual licensing fees for its current predictive rent arrears software.

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