

Improving customer experience with digital transformation

Peaks & Plains Housing Trust were looking to augment the service they provide to customers whilst ensuring that the organisation was running as efficiently as possible. To achieve this, they embarked on making digital channel shift a reality across the Trust.

The Trust owns and manages over 5,000 homes designed for families, singles, couples, and older people, including supported housing and shared ownership properties, and were rated in the national top 10% of housing associations by the Audit Commission on their last inspection.

Transforming the service to customers

Where the Trust really wanted to transform customer experience was to make it easier for tenants to pay rent and to log a repair and an appointment online. To do this, they used Capita's OPENAccess solution to create a customer portal, 'My Account', which was integrated with Capita's OPENHousing, DRS Planning tool and Totalmobile solutions, so that all the Trust's information was managed, and automated, from one place.

Gary Naylor, Repairs Operations Manager, explains how this works: "By using OPENAccess integrated with OPENHousing, DRS and Totalmobile, the customer simply logs into their account to report a repairs issue, which then automatically raises a job and searches the maintenance team's diary for the next available slots. The slots are then offered instantly to the customer to select and book their appointment."

"Customers can also upload photos of the required repair and a description, so that the maintenance engineer can arrive as prepared as possible to fix the issue on the spot, reducing the need for a second visit."

Neil Bancroft, Head of Service Improvement, adds: "Occasionally it makes sense, from a safety perspective, to have two members of the maintenance team on a job. Where there are potential safeguarding issues that have been flagged on OPENHousing, the back-office system alerts us to send two members of staff; protecting our staff and providing the most appropriate service for our customers."

Case study

Peaks & Plains Housing Trust

Aim:

To transform customer experience, including making it easier for tenants to pay rent and log repairs.

Solution:

Capita's OPENAccess, OPENHousing, DRS Planning tool and Totalmobile solutions

Impact:

The Trust has achieved digital transformation in how repairs are automated and managed, offering customers a seamless experience and realising efficiencies.

"We've achieved true digital transformation in how we automate and manage our repairs, offering our customers a seamless experience and realising efficiencies in the process."

*Neil Bancroft,
Head of Service Improvement*

Engaging customers in the digital wave

The Trust recognised that they needed to focus on encouraging customers to use the 'My Account' area of their site and invested in recruiting two digital engagement officers who supported customers with creating their account, as well as help with other areas such as setting up an email address and finding the best energy deal. To further encourage take up by customers, the operations team is trained so they can sign people up to My Account using their tablets when they visit a home for a repair.

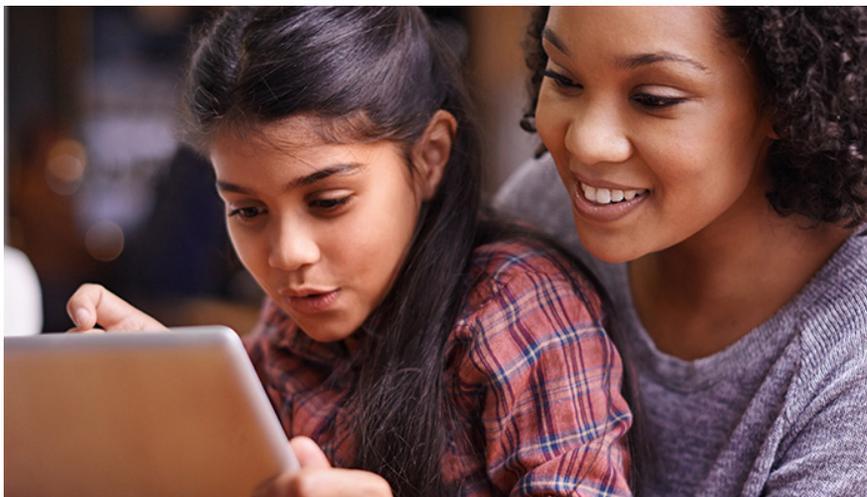
Neil and Gary are delighted with how the project has been received by customers, as Neil explains: "Already more than a third of our customers – around 2,000 people - have signed up to manage their account online and around 30% of the available repairs and inspections are now booked via the portal. More than 4,000 rent payments have also been made online."

"We're offering a better service to our customers, from making it easier and more convenient for them to book a maintenance visit, something they can now do after the kids have gone to bed, to easier rent payments and a more efficient maintenance service. As a result, we've had lots of positive feedback from customers, who can really see the benefit and have commented about the improved accessibility to our services."

Analysing data for more informed decision-making

The Trust has also valued being able to rely on having all the information they need to hand: "Because OPENHousing is fully integrated, whenever our customers make a payment, log a repair, or change their contact details, this is all written directly into our OPEN database – as a result we have the most up to date information in real-time, ensuring we're better able to get in touch with our customers, and that we have the full picture at our fingertips," says Neil.

"We're also able to interrogate the data to learn more about the performance of our properties, perhaps if



we're concerned about particular homes which have a higher than usual repair need. By having this information to hand we can make better, more informed decisions."

Leading the way in the digital transformation of social housing

Peaks & Plains Housing Trust are justly proud of leading the way in using technology to transform their service delivery: "We believe we're one of the first housing organisations in the UK to offer this fully automated service, and we were delighted to be the hosts for an open day recently, where other housing associations and providers visited us to see how self-service is working.

Neil summarises the impact of the digital programme: "We've been really impressed by our partnership with Capita – the team listened and understood what we wanted to achieve, and responded with a solution which met our needs. As a result, we've achieved true digital transformation in how we automate and manage our repairs, offering our customers a seamless experience and realising efficiencies in the process."

Gary agrees: "We've been using Capita's OPENHousing system for a few years and value how we have a comprehensive view of our information, all in one place. It was therefore a natural step to look to Capita to support us in our digital transformation campaign with their OPENAccess and Totalmobile solutions, making it easier for staff to perform their roles and freeing their time to focus on providing the best possible service to our customers."

Sharing best practice:

"To ensure we're as efficient as possible, we stopped using the system of categorising maintenance appointments as urgent and routine, instead we offer the customer a choice of next available appointments. This enables them to schedule a visit at a time they know they can be at home, which is not only better for the customer, but it helps our maintenance team use their time more effectively."

Gary Naylor, Repairs Operations Manager