

Case Study



The voice of technology
enabled care

Preparing for a Digital Future

How Grand Union Housing Group

Uses Technology to Support its Residents



Preparing for a Digital Future: a case study

The switch from analogue to digital opens the door to a world of opportunities in the way people can be supported to live as independently as possible.

For Grand Union Housing Group – which provides homes for more than 27,000 people across Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire – using technology to support customers is a key part of its business.

However, preparing for this technological shift can feel overwhelming.

Like many social housing organisations, Grand Union has acquired stock of all shapes and sizes over a number of years. This creates a complex picture from an asset management point of view – not least when it comes to technology enabled care (TEC).

Grand Union has around 4,000 people who use its Life24 telecare and support service, including its own customers and those who live in the Bedford Borough Council region.

The technology and infrastructure used in Life24 varies enormously, from the latest TEC to cabling that's more than 30 years old.

When he was first tasked with preparing Grand Union for a digital future, it was a “daunting” prospect, admits Mark Green, Life24, Visiting & Partnerships Manager. But it was about to get a whole lot easier with support from TSA.

“We were thinking, we have all these different kinds of technology out there – what do we do? It's really daunting to start with because when you approach companies you're just bamboozled with all this different technology and each manufacturer says theirs is the best!

Helping Hand

"We didn't have the technical know-how to be able to tell what would suit our needs and fulfil our ambitions for the future. TSA was our first port of call – they've got the understanding of the industry and they're impartial. If we'd gone anywhere else there would probably have been a bias towards some sort of product."

Andy Bailey, housing associate at TSA, carried out a survey of a cross-section of Grand Union's schemes to gauge the condition of what was in place and talked to staff, customers and carers to get their feedback.

He then produced and presented a report to Grand Union outlining where to prioritise for upgrades and the best solutions for the organisation moving forward to ensure it makes the most of digital technology.

Unlocking Digital

The report became the starting point for the organisation's digital journey with TSA, says Mark. "It was really detailed and gave us a clear idea of where our priorities were. It's given us the data that's key to us moving forward and making sure we get the benefits we want from digital, such as being able to do a lot more things remotely and connecting into the Internet of Things. That's really important for us. If we are investing significant money, we don't want to put something in that's basically the same as what we've got but digital."

Grand Union's situation is similar to many social landlords, explains

Charlotte Dugdale, strategy and engagement manager at TSA.

"Like a lot of housing organisations, they have legacy issues to work through. "We're seeing more and more housing associations acquire smaller landlords. When you add that to previous stock transfers from local authorities, it often means there's a huge mix of schemes with differing services and technologies that you have to work through. But once it's digital it will be more aligned because you're dealing with similar solutions."

While around three-quarters of customers are over 65, Life24 supports people of all ages and with a variety of needs – including a three-year-old with epilepsy.

"We use silent alarms for people at risk of domestic abuse and have also used technology to tackle antisocial behaviour," says Mark. "We try to be flexible with it and digital will let us do that even more. TSA really think outside the box for us, working to understand our customers and how we can best support them through technology."



Market support

TSA is now supporting Grand Union to go out to tender with a view to working with a manufacturer or a number of manufacturers that can develop tailored solutions.

That includes creating the specification, establishing the relevant framework, organising equipment demos and acting as a critical friend – enabling Grand Union to ask the right questions and get clarifications from bidders where necessary.

“This whole piece of work is to help Grand Union from the very beginning to look at which schemes to focus on first, to understand what’s in the market and fully understand the digital switch,” says Charlotte Dugdale.

“Organisations like Grand Union don’t want more of the same – they want to know how digital can enable them to do more for their customers than simply keeping them safe at home.

“If you don’t know the market, you need support and by working in collaboration we can help them to be in a more empowered position when they go out to tender.”

Benefits & Improvements

The organisation now has a clear and detailed view of the condition of TEC across its schemes and where to prioritise investment in upgrades

Staff, customers and carers have been engaged in Grand Union’s digital journey

Staff now have a deeper knowledge of TEC and a better understanding of the best solutions moving forward

A framework and specification are in place to steer a successful procurement process

Get in touch

For further information and support around your technology needs across Housing, Health and Social Care, contact:
consultancy@tsa-voice.org.uk



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