MEETING EXPECTATIONS WITH DIGITAL CARE

White paper: why housing providers are planning for a digital future

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WELCOME

TIM BARCLAY
CEO, APPELLO

Digital technology is beginning to have a significant impact on housing providers in all areas of their business. This may well be a time of unprecedented change, but more importantly it is a time full of great opportunities.

In the telecare sector there are external factors that are driving the market towards digital such as the commitment for analogue telephony services to be switched off entirely by 2025. These infrastructure changes are creating risks to resident safety with increasing call failure rates, but it is pleasing to see in our research that housing providers are focussed on improving the resident experience. Ensuring residents are safe remains a priority but it appears housing providers are waking up to the realisation that digital can offer them so much more than has been previously possible.

The industry has made steady progress in the last two years, and as suppliers, we have shown that this technology not only works but hugely exceeds the capabilities of previous systems.

For many housing providers, this deadline is still considered a long way off, but this does not mean that everything will run smoothly up until that point. It's important that providers act now to ensure the highest standards in the provision of care for all customers.

While, on the face of it, this may pose a challenge to housing providers, we at Appello see it as a huge opportunity for digital innovation in the sector; innovation which could vastly improve quality of life, and help those housing providers who are willing to embrace new technologies to achieve competitive advantage.

This report highlights the importance of putting your digital plan into action today.

JEREMY PORTEUS
DIRECTOR, HOUSINGLIN

The adoption of new technologies offers a vast untapped potential to transform our housing with care. That is why we have updated our joint 2016 report on digital technology in the sector.

Of course, installing digital technology is not an end in itself. Rather, as highlighted by the new Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock, it offers a rare chance to significantly improve the lives of older and disabled people – while improving the sustainability of our health and social care systems in the face of unprecedented demographic pressures.

Indeed, it is likely that the adult social care green paper will nudge commissioners and providers to embrace the digital revolution as part of the solution to the way social care is delivered.

Above all, digital health and care technology can empower older and disabled people to manage their own health and wellbeing at home. It can help them break down social isolation by making communication with friends, family and care staff easier. That also has obvious safety benefits, as does the vastly improved call connection capability and reliability compared to analogue services.

Embracing the digital revolution could become a virtuous circle of improvement as housing and care providers learn more about people's needs and wishes through their customers' interactions with the new technology. These insights will enable them to offer more personalised support and access to additional services, where appropriate.

This follow-up to our 2016 report should inform and inspire policy makers and decision makers across housing, social care and health to look at the opportunities. Digital technology is not – and can never be a panacea. It is, however, surely part of the solution.

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology promises to revolutionise telecare in the supported housing sector. But how ready is the sector?

This is the second in a series of reports exploring digital telecare transformation in the supported housing sector, following on from our previous report, Fast Forward to Digital Care (1), published in 2016.

Digital care or telecare encompasses the provision of assisted living, self-care and monitoring services, that are founded on IP-based technologies. It is an approach increasingly favoured by many in the sector and at the highest levels, particularly as we approach the cut off for analogue telephony services in 2025.

Digital solutions can transform the way people live, communicate and manage their own health and wellbeing. At the same time, they offer housing providers deeper insights into people's requirements, enabling them to offer better, more personalised support and housing management. And, tantalisingly it offers the potential to cost-effectively improve outcomes that not only benefit the housing sector, but which also support interventions that deliver a health and social care dividend.

But the journey from analogue to digital is not well understood. What are the drivers behind the digital revolution, the key challenges and strategies for overcoming them?

Since the last report we have seen and will continue to see major changes in the telecare market, such as the reduction of initial upfront costs and further advancements of equipment and technology, as well as planned changes to the network infrastructure confirmed by both BT and the TSA, the industry body for technology enabled care (TEC) services. Service providers are now delivering digital at scale; for example, working with our housing partners, Appello has to date provided its digital solutions to thousands of residents across over 100 UK developments in the past two years.

This report is for decision makers in housing associations and providers of supported housing, policy makers, local authorities, charities, house builders, and anyone involved in the provision of services for independent living for our ageing population. It includes primary research carried out by Appello, a leading provider of digital telecare services, in partnership with the Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network). The survey polled 65 senior executives from across the sector, ranging from providers of supported housing and local authorities to those responsible for delivering support to older people at home.

Respondents came from organisations, ranging in size from fewer than 100 staff to those employing more than 5,000. The survey polled a variety of functions, including strategy, operations, and care and support — ensuring that the results cover a broad cross- section of viewpoints.

We look at how attitudes to digital in 2018 have changed since 2016, to offer one of the most comprehensive studies of digital transformation within the supported housing and care sectors to date.

Fig 1   Which best describes your current role?

- 8% None of the above
- 1% Administration or Support
- 26% Senior Leadership Executive/Board Level Director
- 65% Senior Manager/ Manager

Fig 2   What function best describes your role?

- 23% Other
- 9% Care and Support
- 3% Customer Service
- 28% Strategy
- 0% Asset Mgmt IT/ICT Finance Procurement
- 37% Service Delivery/ Operations
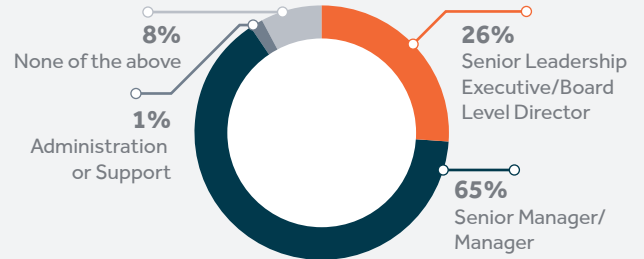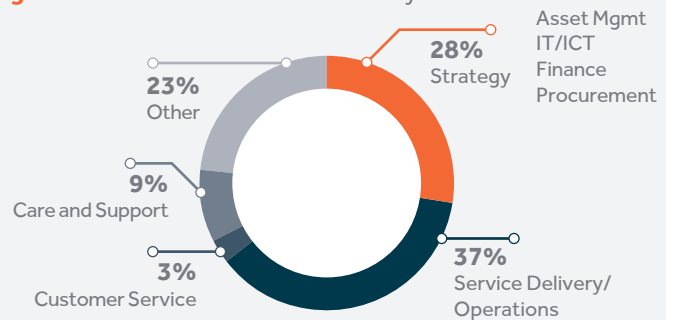
GETTING READY FOR A DIGITAL FUTURE

Telephony infrastructure upgrades, an ageing population, the lack of suitable housing and shifting customer expectations are causing issues for the supported housing sector

TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR ANALOGUE TELECARE

The main external factor affecting the findings of this survey and report compared to the previous whitepaper, released in 2016, is that now the deadline to switch to a digital telecare system has been set; BT (2) has confirmed that it is switching the analogue telephony system off by 2025 in favour of digital. Although this is seven years away, we're seeing that call failures are on the increase, year-on-year, and that the quality of service is in decline, posing a risk to residents currently using analogue systems.

When asked if they were aware of the 2025 analogue signal switch, 82% of survey respondents said they were and the remaining were unsure. But, for many, this awareness isn't translating into action. If the majority of housing providers are aware of the digital switchover, why aren't they more willing to act now?

Fig 3 Are you aware that that by 2025, analogue telephony services will be switched off entirely?

18% Don't know

82% Yes

0% No
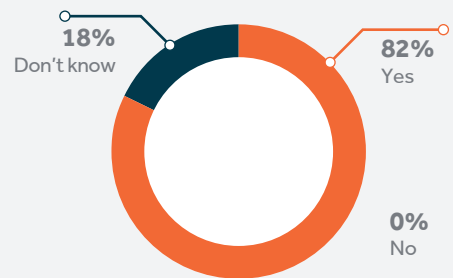
"This research highlights that in the last few years some housing providers have started to make progress with ensuring their equipment is compatible as we move to a digital network, based entirely on internet protocol. Their commitment and proactive approach to futureproofing and safety has to be commended.

A significant number though need to start on their digital journey now as time is not on our side. Many of the systems employed in a housing context carry an asset value that may be amortised over a life of 7 to 10 years, which means that procurement decisions are already being impacted. Housing providers need assurance that alarm and communication infrastructure will survive the digital migration intact, or can be upgraded to meet the demands of interoperability, security and reliability in the digital world. TSA is working with Ofcom, communications providers and system providers to create guidance on the key issues facing housing and service providers."

Alyson Scurfield, Chief Executive, TSA

A LACK OF SUITABLE HOUSING IN THE UK

The last report highlighted a growing problem in the UK housing sector. For a start, it is widely understood that the population is growing and ageing. An overview of the ageing population released by the National Office of Statistics released in July 2017 found that the population in the UK was comprised of 18% of people aged 65 and over and 2.4% aged 85 and over. (3)

And as reported in a recent Local Government Association report (4), more appropriate homes for older people will be needed as the ageing population is expected to continue increasing, and the types of accommodation required will change, to reflect their diverse needs.

At the same time, attitudes towards housing are changing. Today, retirees expect housing that meets their lifestyle preferences, i.e. housing that supports independence in later life and helps them enjoy full and active social lives.

"We all live in a digital age where we expect almost immediate connections. So why would it be acceptable to provide older people with an outdated and slow analogue system; particularly one they rely on in an emergency?

Consequently, Housing and Care 21 decided to commit to digitalisation of its services in 2016. The driver has been to ensure our properties and services are fit for the future and meet the changing demands and expectations of older people. Working with a partner to deliver an end to end system has provided a good platform; but the journey does not end there and we continue to explore options with Appello to enhance the functionality (such as a mirror app for mobile devices) and seek solutions to make costs less restrictive "
Tony Tench, COO, Housing and Care 21

We can celebrate the achievement of helping more people live longer; our current population of 11.6 million people over 65 will increase to 16 million in 17 years, and those aged 85 and over will double to 3.4million in 23 years. But we have a long way to go before healthy life expectancy catches up with that. 40 percent of older people live with long term illness, and 59 per cent of those 85 and older have a disability.

So we have a pressing need for greater choice and opportunity for better housing that can support us as we age, and help us to manage our health and daily living with dignity – this includes new technologies to help us to manage our wellbeing and reassure us that we can live safely.

CIH's work on how housing organisations are looking to develop their services through greater use of digital technology shows that we are starting to explore the potential; the evidence of this survey shows we still have some way to go, but that it can provide great value and benefit for residents and organisations.

Sarah Davis, Senior Policy and Practice Officer CIH

THE HOUSING SECTOR IS UNDER PRESSURE

Government initiatives to tackle the national housing shortage are often focussed on first-time buyers. But the often overlooked issue of a current shortage of 17,000 retirement properties not only remains, but is set to double by 2020. (6)

Elsewhere, the older people's housing sector is facing mixed fortunes.

The sector is raising questions about the future revenue funding of supported housing, including sheltered and extra care housing, leading to concerns that this type of affordable provision, one of the largest segments of supported housing, will not be sustainable in the future.

Meanwhile, in a programme that the Government billed as a "decisive shift", a plan to make nearly £5bn of funding available to build over 150,000 homes by 2021 was unveiled in 2016 (7), meeting a range of ownership and development options.

In the last report it was highlighted that £4.7bn of this, to be spent between 2016–2021, was intended to deliver starts on sites for at least 135,000 homes, including 8,000 homes for supported and older people's rental accommodation. This figure has since been increased to £10bn (8) for Help to Buy alone. However, to date there has been no public announcement for a rise in spend for supported and older people's rental accommodation.

THE FUTURE IS DIGITAL

There is no single solution that will balance the changes in housing needs with economic pressures, nor one that will, on its own, deliver the integration of housing, health and social care. Nonetheless, as acknowledged in the government's industrial strategy (8) there is widespread recognition that digital solutions must form part of the answer.

Independent living in the UK is predominantly supported by analogue telecare systems. Telecare encompasses technology such as pull cords and personal alarms, to provide care and support to older and disabled people. These technologies are usually connected to a remote monitoring centre where specialist operators can provide a necessary and timely intervention.

Elsewhere, smart home technologies are starting to gather interest from the housing and social care community, due to their potential to track the activity of residents and thereby enable fully personalised responses and support solutions. According to Professor James Goodwin, the head of research for Age UK, 'We are not far from the day when people routinely have their health monitored from home.' (10)

Smart Home technologies are already enhancing the lives of residents; for example solutions such as lights and blinds that can be controlled by a tabletcan be of real assistance for those who are less mobile. Even widely used mainstream tools such as a fitbit can enable carers to monitor individuals' health and activity from afar, as referenced by Professor Goodwin, allowing more independence for the people who need support, while also supporting carers in their caring role (11)s.

Digital care can provide high-quality alternatives to analogue systems, such as warden call services. But more importantly, digital solutions provide a tool for innovation because they enable providers to collect data that informs their customer understanding and the ability to layer on additional services.

But, while there is consensus over the need to adopt digital, many of the telecare systems deployed today have not changed over the past 30 years. These systems are largely still analogue-based and are frequently incompatible with modern, feature-rich digital systems.

This paper explores the drivers for moving away from analogue based systems, with a focus on the changes to the telephone infrastructure by 2025; and examines the state of readiness of existing providers for this transformation.

The top three drivers identified in our survey were improving the customer experience, creating a better understanding of customers through data and insight and increasing innovation and new ideas. It is encouraging to see that all of these drivers are focused on the end user and delivering a better quality of service. The housing sector has perhaps been slower than many industries to embrace the notion that customer is king when it comes to achieving competitive advantage.

Driving digital, fuelled by new technologies, is a sure fire way for housing providers to improve customer service and prove that they are ahead of the curve versus their competitors.

"The results of the survey and the change in emphasis from the previous one are quite surprising, although it's encouraging to see such an importance on improving customer experience as the main benefit to upgrading to digital. It's clear there has been a positive change in the attitude of the housing provider community, where cost is less of a driver for decisions around the care of residents.

At Places for People, we are trialling smart tech in both private homes and retirement villages. The real scope for improvement is already obvious – it's the improvement to customer experience caused by emergency call connection time reduction, and the hardship of day to day activities for some of our less mobile residents has been eased measurably. Having these solutions is something that helps to differentiate us from the rest of the market. "

Jane Barker, Managing Director, Places for People

Fig 4 What are your organisation's key goals for 2018/19?

Improving the customer experience
1

Creating a better understanding of customers through data and insight
2

Increasing innovation and new ideas
3

Reducing costs
4

Developing specialist care and support services
5

Differentiating our service offerings to improve competitive positioning
6

Growth - increasing number of housing units
7

Staff retention and performance
8

Developing specialist housing units
9

THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL CARE

IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Housing providers have a duty of care to meet the changing expectations of residents and their families. The demographic of those living in supported housing is changing, and the belief that older people don't understand digital or embrace new technologies is outdated. In fact, another recent survey (12) carried out by Appello, in collaboration with Good Things Foundation, on the role of technology in combating loneliness and social isolation, found that 56% of older people embrace technology when it has the potential to enhance their lives. Housing providers are now presented with a unique opportunity to differentiate themselves from competitors by driving these new technologies.

JOINED UP APPROACH

Digital platforms provide the ability for richer integration of devices and services that can be personalised. Deployment of apps promoting lifestyle, self-service, alert reminders or messaging services can easily be integrated and the data dash-boarded to provide a holistic view of an individual. Service innovations like these can help support a superior customer experience and a more accurate analysis of residents' current and future needs.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS

Digital systems give you the data you need to drive performance improvements. You can collect and analyse data — such as adherence to medicine routines — that enables you to design services to improve residents' lives. The rest of this report explores the shift towards digital care, looking at the goals housing providers have set themselves and their digital strategies.

THE DIGITAL ADVANTAGE

FAST CONNECTIONS

Emergency telecare calls connect much faster than analogue systems: average connection times come down from roughly 1 minute 30 seconds to under 3 seconds.

FUTURE-READY INFRASTRUCTURE

IP-ready infrastructure is compatible with the new UK digital network.

INCLUSION

Video calling supports improved communication between residents and staff, and greater safety through video door entry.

ECO-SYSTEM APPROACH

Digital enables providers to develop a single interposable infrastructure where multiple devices can be integrated and care packages tailored.

MULTIPLE SIMULTANEOUS CALLS

With digital systems, there's no call queuing — so door entry calls no longer block emergency telecare calls.

RICHER DATA

Digital care enables huge amounts of information to be collected providing staff with insight into resident wellbeing and the use of technology.

COST EFFECTIVENESS

A digital infrastructure can save staff time and improve housing management performance.

IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE

Ultimately, digital care enables a more personalised service, designed around the needs and preferences of individuals, and recognising that each person is unique, this opportunity should support better outcomes for residents.

"Digital technology clearly offers a plethora of opportunities to do so much more to broaden and improve the services we provide through linking alarm call systems with the vast range of Internet of Things devices that are available. However, Smart Home technology has been a market that has been waiting to take off over the last few years without gaining significant traction until very recently. The challenge is to harness all that potential to deliver products that older people will want to use, maximising the benefits within the home but also to support a range of services. Integration of equipment and data platforms still appears to be a barrier for many." "
Nick Sedgwick, Director of Service Development, Hanover

DIGITAL CHANGE IS COMING

The housing industry recognises the need for new solutions, as the failures of traditional systems become more apparent

DIGITAL PLANS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

The overarching theme of our research is that there is a clear trend towards more housing providers looking to digital solutions as analogue systems begin to fail and the benefits of digital become more evident.

This is indicated through the number of housing providers that now have a plan to move to digital. This number has increased from 28% in 2016 to 40% in 2018. Additionally, those planning to look at digital this year or next has increased from 28% to 36%. Therefore 75% of housing providers are either on or at the beginning of a digital journey.

The large jump in housing providers looking to digital solutions could be attributed to the growing awareness of the changes to the telecoms infrastructure and the approaching 2025 deadline. Increasing call failure rates that put residents at risk of not being able to reach emergency services at critical times, are likely to drive housing providers to act. However, worryingly and even with the above points in mind, 9% of respondents still have no plans to upgrade to digital.

The first time call failure rate for digital is 0.0001 compared to over 10% with analogue, with safety issues around this differential posing more of a priority when factoring in a new telecare solution, when compared to cost.

Fig 5 - 2018 Is your organisation looking to change from traditional analogue warden/community call systems to IP/digital systems?

- **9%** Don't know
- **3%** Not planning at all
- **12%** Not on our plans until 2020 and beyond
- **40%** Yes - we already have a plan to move from analogue to digital
- **36%** Something we are looking at this year or next (2019)

Fig 5 - 2016

- **18%** Don't know
- **9%** Not planning at all
- **17%** Not on our plans until 2018 and beyond
- **28%** Yes - we already have a plan to move from analogue to digital
- **28%** Something we are looking at in 2017 and beyond
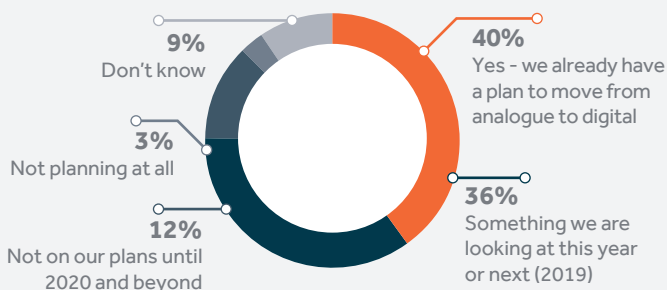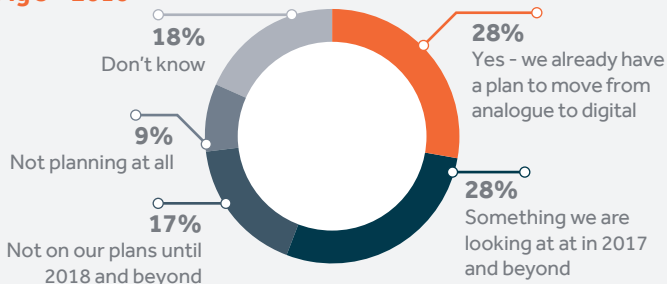
Fig 6 What are your key reasons for upgrading?

Digital is a strategic commitment from our CEO/Board
35%

Existing contracts are coming to an end
12%

We're upgrading as part of our facility/technology refurbishment cycle
48%

There are improved customer benefits from going digital
52%

The upgrade of the UK telecommunications network means the time is right
56%

Our end customers/residents are asking for it
28%

Other
4%

Response Pecent

ARE HOUSING PROVIDERS TOO SLOW TO ACT?

This result points to wider concerns about the industry and its willingness to act quickly in providing the best care for residents ahead of the network changes already in effect.

One in three housing providers are not planning to look at switching to digital for another couple of years, despite increasing call failure rates and declining quality of service that put residents at risk. For example, a 2018 case study released by TSA (13) identified a case in point with Falkirk Council which saw monthly call failure rates of over 12%. It was established that this escalation of failures coincided with changes made by a major telecommunications service provider in upgrading their infrastructure to packet-switched (IP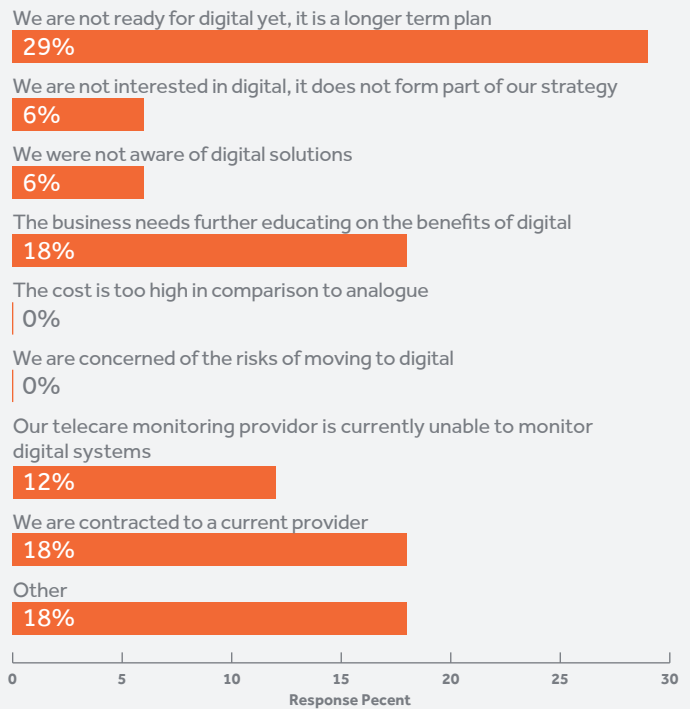) networks. Data collected at Appello's monitoring centre (the largest in the industry) also shows that from June 2016 to June 2018, the number of failed calls increased from 3% to over 10%.

This raises concern that housing providers are failing to factor in the time it will take to upgrade their existing analogue stock to digital, and are not considering that call failures are already happening now.

Fig 7 What are your reasons for not going digital?

We are not ready for digital yet, it is a longer term plan
29%

We are not interested in digital, it does not form part of our strategy
6%

We were not aware of digital solutions
6%

The business needs further educating on the benefits of digital
18%

The cost is too high in comparison to analogue
0%

We are concerned of the risks of moving to digital
0%

Our telecare monitoring providor is currently unable to monitor digital systems
12%

We are contracted to a current provider
18%

Other
18%

Response Pecent

"People aged from 55 to 105 live in homes provided by Hanover. We don't see those aged 20 to 55 as a single market and we should not see all older people as a single market. Some of our customers do not feel comfortable with technology and are likely to remain the same in the future so we need to understand how technology may still offer benefits to them. However, increasing numbers of customers are using the internet and digital technology widely, challenging us to keep up. Voice activated technology is attractive to some, so we need to understand how its benefits may be maximised alongside our existing technology. Flexibility to meet the range of needs and aspirations is key for the future"

Nick Sedgwick, Director of Service Development, Hanover

HOUSING & CARE 21 EXAMPLE

Appello is working with housing provider Housing & Care 21 to provide a move from analogue to digital programme for all of its 430 developments over the next few years. Initial planning between the two organisations began in 2016 to discuss feasibility and budget. It was decided that trying to upgrade all sites at once simply wasn't financially feasible and would mean longer completion dates. So they decided to work on a rolling project basis, thereby spreading the costs.

Later that year Appello transformed one of Housing & Care 21's sites, the Walton Court development in Durham as a test site. Following this success, Housing & Care 21 committed to the programme and the first wave of 100 sites was fully completed in 2018, taking around two years.

Seven years may seem like a way off, but the time to act is now:

- You need to ensure your telecare monitoring provider is compatible with digital solutions

- If they are not, you need to allow time to be released from contract before selecting a new provider

- Selecting a partner for the installation process can take time depending on the amount of properties in need of upgrading

- Most importantly, it is important to ensure your residents are receiving the most reliable service possible, as soon as possible

CHANGING BARRIERS

Since the last report the barriers to digital transformation have shifted for housing providers. In 2016, 34% stated that they felt they needed further education on digital and its benefits before committing to upgrades. This number reduced to 18% in 2018, pointing to a growing awareness of the issue.

The main reason for housing providers holding back now is that they are just not ready (cited by almost 30%) and that it is part of a longer term plan or strategy. We have to question why this is the case? It could be down to budget issues, or perhaps housing providers are locked into contracts with telecare service providers that lack digital capabilities.

Almost 12% stated that their current telecare provider is unable to monitor digital, highlighting a gap in the market for end-to-end digital solutions providers. Worryingly, almost 7% were not aware of digital solutions and almost 7% are not interested as it does not form part of their strategy.

Attitudes to cost and risk have also shifted. In 2016 costs (cited by 17%) and risks (cited by 14%) were perceived as significant barriers to moving to digital. In 2018, not one person raised these as issues. This is likely down to the reduction of the initial costs of equipment, and growing evidence that digital has more reliable connection rates, thereby reducing risks.

"A key driver in the shift to digital is the migration of communications providers from their traditional phone and data connections to systems based entirely on internet protocol and data packets. Ofcom and the major providers advise for example that all traditional phone services will disappear by 2025, to be replaced by voice calls that are delivered digitally across 'IP data pipes'. This creates new options for voice and data (along with new failure modes) and will impact alarm services; Innovative, digital technology options are already emerging, and presenting new opportunities for housing and care providers."
Steve Sadler, TSA Associate – Technology Strategist

THE DRIVERS FOR DIGITAL CHANGE

Safety and long-term investment remain key but evolving customer needs are driving the digital movement

DIGITAL BENEFITS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

In comparison to the 2016 report, it's clear that today the benefits of digital transformation are beginning to be recognised by housing providers, with safety and a long-term investment remaining key drivers.

In 2016, almost 72% cited the need to 'future proof' when asked what they saw as the main benefit of digital, indicating that concerns over technologies becoming obsolete or outdated are a major issue for the industry.

Now in 2018, housing providers are trying to achieve a variety of outcomes through adoption of digital, but safety is still at the forefront with 73% of housing providers citing 'providing residents with the safest possible living environment' as the key benefit of upgrading.

Interestingly, addressing loneliness and social isolation was also raised as a major benefit for respondents: 62% said they hoped an outcome of digital transformation would be the reduction of loneliness. It is expected that the introduction of social connectivity technologies, such as room-to-room video call capabilities will help improve communication between residents and care providers.

CUSTOMER EXPECTATION

It's encouraging to see that most housing providers placed an emphasis on the end user and how the technology will improve customer service. In fact, 70% of respondents claimed that they are looking to meet the changing expectations of customers around technology as an outcome of digital.

In addition, 63% want to create a smarter living environment and 43% see the potential of smart home technology and/or the Internet of Things (IoT) as a key benefit to going digital. This is encouraging in a sector that can sometimes be a late adopter of innovation.

Below are some of the key benefits of digital from a resident's perspective:

• Telecare Apps – enabling alarms, and video calls to be placed from anywhere in a home.

• Video Door Entry – adds security as users can see who's outside without having to open the door

• Smart Lights – can be set to automatically turn on/off at certain times, helping to avoid falls, for example when a resident gets up in the night

• Smart Blinds and Heating – introduces convenience for residents, enabling them to be open or closed with ease from comfort of anywhere in the home

• Video Calling – reduces loneliness, creating community environments and improving independent living

• Voice Activation – enabling convenience through devices being controlled remotely.

Fig 8 - 2018 What outcomes will your organisation be looking to achieve through the introduction of technology?

Ensure we are providing residents with the safest possible living environment
73%

Reduce loneliness and isolation
62%

Prevent moves to residential or nursing care
51%

Provide assurance to facilitate hospital discharge
37%

Give residents greater choice and control over their daily lives
67%

Help to enable delivery of timely care and support at home
56%

Create a smarter living environment
63%

Differentiate our housing offering from our competitors
24%

Meet the changing expectations around technology of our customers
70%

Developing new revenue streams for our organisation
32%

Other
2%

0   20   40   60   80   100
Response Pecent

Fig 9 - 2016 What do you see as the key benefits of a digital care system?

Resilience - improved speed of communication and the ability to transmit multiple calls at the same time (i.e. emergency alarms, door access, fires etc.)
58%

Faster maintenance - real-time monitoring and ability to fix faults remotely
25%

Communications inclusion - residents can make free video and voice calls between facts house manages and other IP enabled schemes
19%

Access to richer data - i.e. activity of residents' health and care information
31%

Future proof - importance of the system being scalable and not obsolete in the future
72%

Competitive differentiation - ability to attract new (or different segment) residents
19%

Connectivity - building integrated partnerships across housing, health and social care
33%

Smart home and IOT - creating a connected home environment
42%

0   20   40   60   80   100
Response Pecent

Fig 10 - 2018 What do you see as the key benefits of a digital care system?

Resilience - improved speed of communication and the ability to transmit multiple calls at the same time (i.e. emergency alarms, door access, fires etc.)
57%

Faster maintenance - real-time monitoring and ability to fix faults remotely
25%

Communications inclusion - residents can make free video and voice calls between facts house manages and other IP enabled schemes
20%

Access to richer data - i.e. activity of residents' health and care information
32%

Future proof - importance of the system being scalable and not obsolete in the future
71%

Competitive differentiation - ability to attract new (or different segment) residents
18%

Connectivity - building integrated partnerships across housing, health and social care
34%

Smart home and IOT - creating a connected home environment
43%

0   20   40   60   80   100
Response Pecent

"I believe that with lives now becoming more dependent on digital technology, there is also an expectation that assisted housing should be upgraded smart technology rather than it being an exclusive, expensive option. Our customers expect our properties to have easy to use, modern and reliable technology, and why shouldn't they if they are readily available and now more affordable? Digital means we do not need to compromise on quality and above all else, safety."

Jane Barker, Managing Director, Places for People

DIGITAL PROGRESS

Housing providers are already making changes, but are they enough?

DIGITAL JOURNEY

58% of housing providers indicated that they are in fact already on a digital telecare journey, with 10% claiming they had undergone a full digital transformation and almost a third trialling digital equipment as part of this digital journey. However, almost a quarter have not yet replaced any analogue systems with digital.

As a follow on question, respondents were asked how this compared to any digital transformation strategy their organisation already has in place since 2016. Only one in ten of those polled said they had switched over the same proportion of their services as originally planned to digital in the past two years. One in ten had switched over more than originally planned. Over a quarter (28%) said they had switched less than planned or none at all, meaning that even those who are aware of the benefits of digital and plan to upgrade, are not acting quickly to replace them or are potentially facing challenges in doing so. Meantime, 23% of respondents have no strategy in place at all. However, this could be due to other issues faced by the providers, such as budget restrictions.

Fig 12 - 2018 Over the past two years how many of the analogue systems in your organisation have been switched to digital?
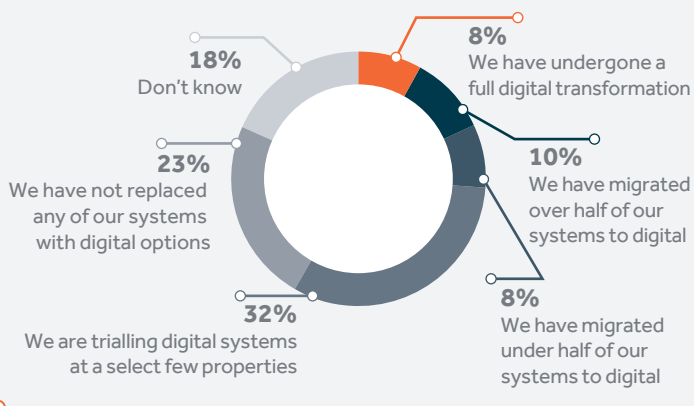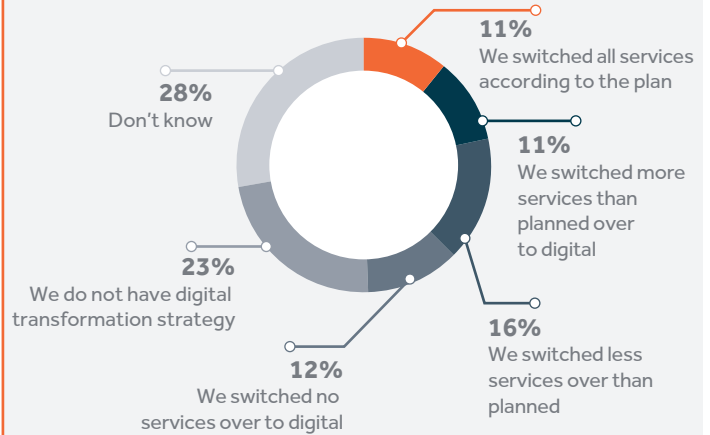

18% Don't know

8% We have undergone a full digital transformation

23% We have not replaced any of our systems with digital options

10% We have migrated over half of our systems to digital

32% We are trialling digital systems at a select few properties

8% We have migrated under half of our systems to digital

Fig 13 - 2018 How does this compare to any digital transformation strategy your organisation had in place?

28% Don't know

11% We switched all services according to the plan

11% We switched more services than planned over to digital

23% We do not have digital transformation strategy

16% We switched less services over than planned

12% We switched no services over to digital

"It is great to see that we may be on the brink of significant focus on technology in housing, not just in the fabric of the building, but in our service offerings of the future.
The opportunity we have to transform services through technology is exciting and can make a real and profound impact. We can do more with the resources that will be available to us in the future, and help our communities to connect, socialise, maintain maximum self-sufficiency, be as fit as possible, be active in communities and receive 'quality rated' services designed to suit each individual. More importantly we have opportunities to reignite self-belief, curiosity and learning throughout our lives and to use this to keep ourselves active and well in mind and body as we age. "
Julia Ashley, Chief Executive, Central and Cecil
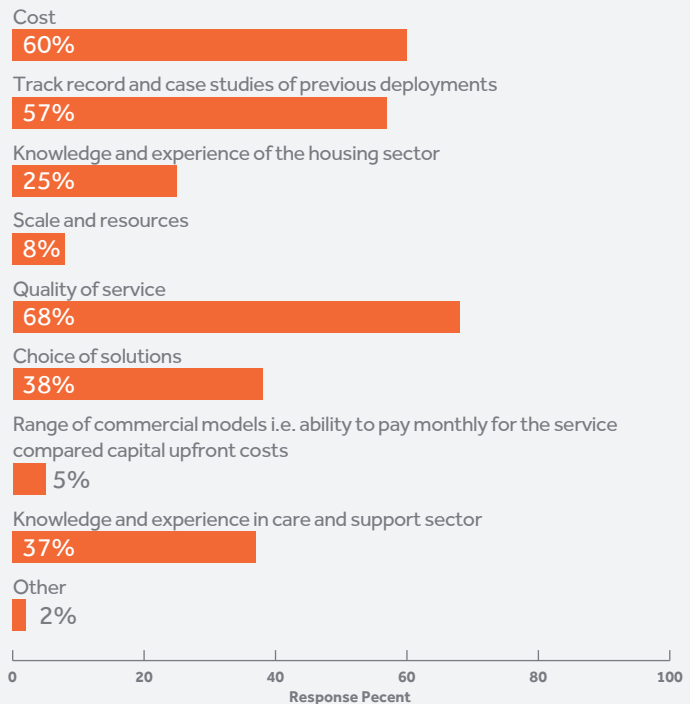
SELECTING THE RIGHT PARTNER

In 2016, 74% of respondents cited cost as one of the most important factors when it came to selecting a digital partner.

It's clear that in the last two years there has been a change in the decision making process in many organisations; while cost is still an important factor in 2018 (cited by 60%), it is no longer the number one priority. Focus has instead shifted to quality of service, cited by more than two thirds of respondents (68%), while 57% are keen to work with a supplier with a proven track record. This could be because initial costs are falling and/or due to a growing recognition that the digital switchover is on the horizon and that selecting the right partner is critical.

Clearly, housing providers are putting more thought into selecting a partner. They want to hear from service providers that are delivering digital services at scale, who can provide testimonials and evidence of success. They want to hear from their peers when it comes to making a decision, to ensure they are making the right choice.

Fig 14 - 2018   What are the main factors you'd consider when choosing a provider? Choose three.

Cost
60%

Track record and case studies of previous deployments
57%

Knowledge and experience of the housing sector
25%

Scale and resources
8%

Quality of service
68%

Choice of solutions
38%

Range of commercial models i.e. ability to pay monthly for the service compared capital upfront costs
5%

Knowledge and experience in care and support sector
37%

Other
2%

0   20   40   60   80   100
Response Pecent

"Over half of housing providers indicated that they are already on some kind of digital telecare journey, although at this stage, worryingly, less than a third are trialling equipment. In 2016, cost was the most important factor when it came to selecting a digital partner. However, that focus has shifted to working with a supplier with a proven track record and customer references and quality of service"
Steve Sadler, TSA Associate – Technology Strategist

RECOMMENDATIONS

DON'T DELAY

As an industry we must start looking at what the housing sector will look like, not just in the next seven years as we approach the digital switchover deadline, but beyond that to the next 10 to 20 years. We also need to consider the role technology will have in shaping our industry. Earlier in this report we pointed out that a higher proportion of the population in the UK is ageing, creating growing pressures on housing and social care. A green paper due out in the autumn of this year will hopefully set out plans for the better integration of health and social care, as well as housing, including a funding model of care for the future. It is hoped that a heavy emphasis will be put on technology and digital services to drive efficiencies in these sectors and allow older people to play an active role in the design and delivery of their own care in later life.

Digital change is already happening. For all of us, it is a matter of whether we choose to be at the forefront of the digital housing revolution, or if we bide our time. We recommend that housing providers should plan for that change today, not only to protect the safety of their residents with changes to the network on the horizon, but also to deliver greater efficiencies and value added services.

Technology will always continue to evolve, but we have seen a significant step change from analogue to digital and residents deserve to reap these benefits today. Continuing to wait for the next advancement can be everlasting and will only make the challenges of upgrading to digital in a timely manner more challenging. Furthermore, as we have now moved to a digital environment, upgrading in the future is even simpler. A matter of downloading new software updates with the latest features can happen in moments, without the need for changing physical equipment.

Our research has shown that the top priorities for today's housing providers are: improving the customer experience, driving safety and reducing risk for residents. We have now seen that, with the advancement of technology, digital solutions are critical to delivering this.

New innovations, ideas and joined up digital technologies can accelerate the home of tomorrow, today. How can digital practices be embedded in your organisation's culture? What does the shift to digital mean for your investment in legacy systems?

THE SPONSORS

ABOUT APPELLO

Appello has over 30 years' experience of blending specialist people in the UK's largest TECS monitoring centre, with future-led digital technology.

We partner with housing, health and care providers to enrich the lives of customers, patients and residents.

We help keep over 180,000 people safe, secure, well and living 'smart' within their communities, with the reassurance they are connected to our experts who have insight into their wellbeing.

To find out more about our services, or to book a digital workshop, visit www.appello.co.uk

ABOUT HOUSING LIN

Housing LIN is a sophisticated network bringing together over 40,000 housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales to exemplify innovative housing and technology enabled solutions for an ageing population. Recognised by government and industry as a leading 'knowledge hub' on specialist housing, our online and regional networked activities:

• Connect people, ideas and resources to inform and improve the range of housing choices that enable older and disabled people to live independently.

• Provide intelligence on latest funding, research, policy and practice developments, and

• Raise the profile of specialist housing with developers, commissioners and providers to plan, design and deliver aspirational housing and services for an ageing population.

For information about the Housing LIN's comprehensive list of online resources on housing and telecare, visit their dedicated online pages at: https://www.housinglin.org.uk/going-digital/.

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