

Appendix: Other shortlisted entries: Best Customer Impact WATMOS Community Homes | Platform Housing Group & Voicescape

What was the project and what was innovative about the service provided?

WATMOS' project was only achieved through partnership with SMS (contractor) Watmos and Walsall Council and marked a significant milestone in its journey towards innovative social housing solutions. It emerged through collaborative efforts, jointly applying for SHDF funding, supporting its ambitious vision for a large-scale retrofit upgrade project. Initiative aimed to enhance thermal efficiency in 1074 homes across 21 tower blocks in 4 estates in Walsall, working on 21 high rise tower blocks in a tight geography, sympathetically to the estate, parking and living conditions through a very intrusive project. The 1960s blocks had multiple challenges – different construction, structural repairs, hidden methods of construction, exposed working – all had to be addressed, designed for, and responded to as a team to reach satisfactory conclusion. Dedication to investing in the local Walsall economy and community through several meaningful measures: - resident-centric decision-making when needing parking spaces for site setup, sourcing additional parking to minimise inconvenience to residents, hiring a multi storey car park; actively encouraged residents to apply for jobs within the project, resulting in three residents securing permanent positions; Resident Liaison Officers were recruited through local unemployment services, offering opportunities to four individuals from the NEET population; focused on empowering residents by collaborating with a local college to arrange career advice and skills days on-site, showcasing future career possibilities.

PHG – Prior to 2021, PHG, one of the UK's largest housing associations, arranged gas service appointments via prescriptive letters and texts to customers. The customer would then contact the landlord if they wanted to rearrange their appointment. This outmoded process discouraged customers from rebooking and led to high numbers of no-access visits - further compounded by resident concerns around COVID. To avoid non-compliance, PHG was forced to bring in additional resources to manually call residents and book appointments - a costly and inefficient process. As a result, PHG turned to Voicescape, a long-term partner, to develop a more efficient process. It was quickly identified that the issue wasn't merely the one-way nature of communications, but that the engagement process was not resident-centric. The solution was Voicescape Compliance, an automated appointment booking, confirming and rescheduling technology which actively involves residents in the maintenance scheduling process. Using a 'triage' process, residents are given a proposed time and the flexibility to adjust it via simple reply to an SMS that takes them directly through to a servicing planner in the PHG team. Residents feel engaged, empowered, and don't have to make inconvenient calls involving lengthy queues and frustrating interactive voice response options. The transformation has been immediate. Within five months, PHG recorded an 18% improvement in first-time access rates and 96.4% customer satisfaction level. It was such a success that the project was extended to cover electrical safety checks. The no-access rate for these subsequently reduced by 11% in four months.

What were the measurable benefits to the client, the contractor, the resident, and the neighbourhood?

WATMOS - Beyond energy efficiency, they set out to have a positive and meaningful impact on the lives of over 1,000 residents by addressing the need to upgrade hard-to-treat properties. Their collective aim was to provide modern living conditions that were affordable, damp-proof, well-ventilated, and warm. By implementing energy-efficient measures, they sought to reduce carbon emissions and align the buildings with Decent Homes Standards. Its vision was to ensure these properties had at least a further 30-year life, guaranteeing a sustainable and future-proof living environment for the residents. The visible skyline and stigma of these estates has changed visually. 1074 properties have moved to minimum EPC C and thus supported movement towards net zero. Both Watmos and Surefire are dedicated to investing in the local Walsall economy and community through several meaningful measures: - Prioritising engaging local contractors to carry out various stages, supporting the local economy and strengthening community ties; Watmos demonstrated resident-centric decision-making when needing parking spaces for site setup, sourcing additional parking to minimise inconvenience to residents, hiring a car park from a local company; project team actively encouraged residents to apply for jobs within the project, resulting in three residents securing permanent positions with on-site contractors; Surefire's Resident Liaison Officers were recruited through local unemployment services, offering opportunities to 4 individuals from the NEET population, supporting their growth and long-lasting employment prospects; Regular coffee mornings with residents, attended by Watmos's and Surefire management teams, provided an open forum to address concerns and foster transparent communication; Watmos also focused on empowering residents by collaborating with a local college to arrange career advice and skills days on-site, showcasing future career possibilities. Michelle Barry: 'I am so pleased with Watmos and pleased that my home was selected to be part of the project. My home benefited from all the improvements, including windows and external wall insulation, having the improvements have definitely saved me money, I've not had to put my heating on since having the works done. Its great!' Linda Farley: 'Well what can I say about Watmos, not sure where to start. I've only been here for 2 years and I'm ecstatic, the complex is outstanding, the gardens, people and staff but what I'm really impressed with is the up-grading work we have had done with new windows, balconies it's all very exciting. The external wall insulation is amazing it's saved me money on my energy bills almost immediately and with the cost of living so high it's a god send. As a company I feel they are outstanding in all areas, can't fault them.'

PHG and Voicescape's collaboration represents a paradigm shift in how maintenance and compliance is approached. The tangible benefits delivered to each stakeholder group underscore the technology's transformative impact: PHG: Operational efficiency: With the integration of the Voicescape system, PHG has streamlined its workflows. The staggering 95% of customers responding via the automated service demonstrates how the new approach transforms customer engagement, making operations smoother and more customer focused. Financial prudence: Each no-access visit is estimated to cost landlords between £75 and £100. The reduction in no-access visits, an 18% improvement for gas servicing and an 11% decrease for electrical safety checks, therefore equates to significant financial savings. This optimisation allowed PHG to recover its investment within five months, showcasing the ROI potential of the innovation. Safety and compliance: With automated reminders complemented by the resident-centric scheduling, the new system enables efficient and stringent adherence to statutory maintenance requirements. PHG has achieved an average first-time access rate of 81%, ensuring homes remain compliant and safe. Platform Property Care (PPC), a subsidiary of PHG responsible for delivering maintenance and compliance activities: - boosted workplace morale; planning team noted increased proactivity in their roles, leading to a more positive and efficient work environment. The approach has reinforced the crucial and satisfying role the team plays in enhancing the lives. Customer focus: Outgoing calls are matched to the available resource, helping to maintain high standards on 1-2-1 care. Resource optimisation:

The flexibility afforded to residents translates to higher first-time access rates. This efficiency allows PPC to better allocate resources, optimise routes, and significantly reduce downtime. Data-driven operations: - Voicescape Compliance provides instantaneous data on resident interactions, granting PPC the agility to identify and focus on, for example, non-communicative residents and swiftly tweak strategies where necessary. Enhanced productivity: - direct consequence of less rescheduling and missed appointments is a spike in productivity. Contractors now can accomplish more within the same timeframe. Residents: - Empowerment, in the past, residents often felt sidelined when it came to appointment scheduling. Now, they've regained control - scheduling maintenance visits at their convenience - leading to minimal disruptions and a sense of empowerment. Efficient communication: - Voicescape's voice-based interactions, residents experience significantly reduced waiting times in comparison to typical inbound calls to the planning team. Calls utilising the Voicescape system have an average 90 second waiting time, compared to an overall average waiting time of four minutes. Increased satisfaction: - the combination of autonomy, clear communication, and efficient service has led to a commendable increase in resident satisfaction rates, now standing at an impressive 96.4%. Neighbourhood: Safety: A well-maintained property is not just an asset to the resident but to the entire community. Regular, punctual maintenance checks enhance the safety quotient of individual homes, thereby uplifting the overall safety profile of PHG's entire housing stock. Uniform high service standards: With 95% of customers responding via the automated service, the Voicescape system ensures that a consistent and high standard of service is maintained across all properties, resulting in positivity and assurance.

What were the financial costs and measurable cashable benefits over a defined time period?

WATMOS's overarching objective was to significantly improve the thermal efficiency of each property, resulting in reduced energy consumption and mitigating the risk of damp and mould. They were determined to create comfortable homes for residents, especially in light of the ongoing energy pricing crisis across the United Kingdom, which posed challenges to many households facing fuel poverty. The total contract £19 million. Securing additional funding was a significant milestone in their collaboration. Together with Watmos Community Homes and Walsall Council, they successfully obtained funding from ECO4 and SHDF Wave 1. Their joint bid for SHDF funding resulted in an impressive £7.9 million, the largest single project to receive such funding. This achievement exemplified their effective collaboration, and they were determined to deliver the project within the agreed timescales. Linda Farley: 'Well what can I say about Watmos, not sure where to start. I've only been here for 2 years and I'm ecstatic, the complex is outstanding, the gardens, people, and staff but what I'm really impressed with is the up-grading work we have had done with new windows, balconies it's all very exciting. The external wall insulation is amazing it's saved me money on my energy bills almost immediately and with the cost of living so high it's a god send. As a company I feel their outstanding in all areas, can't do enough for you. The estate is looking gorgeous, I'm looking forward to sitting on my very classy balcony in the summer. Very impressed all round, thank you!'

PHG - Prior to this initiative, a prescriptive, one-way engagement approach was costing PHG not only in monetary terms, but also in terms of efficiency and staff morale. Upon implementing Voicescape's Compliance solution, a wide range of both direct and indirect measurable benefits have been achieved: Reduced no-access costs: Before Voicescape, access issues to properties were common, leading to increased operational costs. With the new solution, first-time access rates soared, with gas servicing improving by 18%. This meant fewer repeat visits, translating to direct cost savings. Increased efficiency: automation process led to streamlined booking, amendment, and confirmation of appointments. This efficiency not only saved time but also reduced costs associated with manual follow-ups. The evidence is in the reduction of average call waiting times, from 4 minutes to 1 minute 30 seconds. Rapid ROI: The investment in Voicescape Compliance paid for itself within five months of rollout. Such a quick return on investment is a testament to the tangible financial benefits the solution offers. Enhanced customer satisfaction: While not a direct financial metric, the significant increase in

customer satisfaction to 96.4% can lead to fewer complaints and better customer retention, indirectly leading to financial benefits in the long run. The partnership between PHG and Voicescape has not only redefined the approach to maintenance and repairs but has also resulted in measurable financial savings and benefits over a defined period, proving that innovation can be both cost-effective and service enhancing.

How relevant is this as an example that might be followed by other organisations?

WATMOS - Throughout the project, its partnership demonstrated strong alignment and coordination. Regular meetings with stakeholders from both Watmos and Surefire ensured careful review and optimisation of project timelines, objectives, and resident engagement. Our dedication to delivering high-quality work was evident in meeting the rigorous PAS 20230 / 2035 standards and providing all required milestone evidence for SHDF. Central to our success was engaging residents in each tower block. Surefire Management Services introduced themselves as a trusted contractor, building confidence among residents regarding crucial upgrades to their homes. They worked alongside Watmos to inform residents of project proposals, seeking their valuable input through regular community events. A noteworthy aspect of their engagement was collaborating with residents in selecting colour schemes for each estate, promoting a sense of ownership and pride in their homes and community. Watmos led in producing newsletters and letters to keep residents informed and engaged throughout the project. Surefire ensured consistent communication, promptly addressing any difficult conversations. These are some of the key positive aspects of our project that can be readily adopted, their biggest oversight in hindsight was the significant impact felt by residents in losing access to their balconies whilst the works were in progress and how these were areas of respite and gave comfort, in a number of areas this affected mental health and they had to find solutions for protected access or alternate access to other areas of private refuge, in one block they adapted and allowed access to a protected roof area, or extended seating areas, With the project nearing completion, they are proud of the transformation achieved. Over 40 homes now have monitoring equipment, assessing the impact of the works on energy usage, humidity, temperature, and air changes, enhancing living conditions. The project's completion transformed estates and provided thermal comfort amid rising energy prices. Surefire's partnership with Watmos and Walsall Council played a pivotal role in this remarkable feat. Delighted by positive feedback, their high Net Promoter Score reflects improved lives, well-being, and health of residents. Their collaboration made a lasting, positive impact on the community they serve. Testimonials from Watmos' residents that were happy to share their experience: Michelle Barry: 'I am so pleased with Watmos and pleased that my home was selected to be part of the project. My home benefited from all the improvements, including windows and external wall insulation, having the improvements have definitely saved me money, I've not had to put my heating on since having the works done. Its great!'

PHG's issues - limited customer engagement, lengthy call waiting queues, and reduced first-time access rates - are not unique. Across the social housing sector, issues such as tenant engagement, no-access visits, and ensuring cost-effectiveness are universally challenging. What sets this project apart is the systematic way in which PHG has worked with Voicescape to address these challenges using a modern, data-driven solution. The transformative shift from prescriptive engagement methods to proactive, consultative engagement is something that all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) can learn from and embrace to enhance customer interactions while reducing levels of no-access visits. By automating contact, Voicescape Compliance facilitates engagement that brings organisations closer to their customers. More than just enhancing efficiency, this nurtures resident trust and cultivates a collaborative experience. Voicescape already supports over 70 organisations across the UK, empowering them to connect with communities at scale across critical touchpoints, including not only gas servicing and electrical safety checks, but also in areas such as rent collection and customer feedback. For RSLs and their contractors, the benefits include enhanced compliance, improved maintenance schedules, and most importantly, heightened customer satisfaction. Moreover, the tangible financial savings and increased efficiency evidenced by PHG make it an attractive model on both operational and economic fronts.