

CASE STUDY

CDW BUILDS A PLATFORM FOR INNOVATION AT ESTUARY HOUSING ASSOCIATION



OVERVIEW

- Ageing on-premises infrastructure at Estuary Housing Association was impeding IT performance and placing a burden on the IT team.
- The introduction of CDW's hosted cloud platform, ServiceWorks, has eliminated the challenges with a managed service solution which has enabled the IT team to focus on future innovation.
- Improvements in reliability, efficiency and productivity have all been reported as outcomes of the migration.

ABOUT ESTUARY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

- A housing association serving every district in Essex, as well as three outer boroughs of East London and the Suffolk Coastal District.
- Owns and manages over **4,500** properties and provides care and support services to meet local needs.
- Employs over **300** people, two-thirds of whom provide care and support to people with learning difficulties.

CHALLENGE

The foundation of IT services at Estuary Housing Association was built on ageing on-site hardware which had not received significant investment for almost four years and was nearing the end of its support. At the same time, demand for IT services had increased rapidly while the organisation grew in size.

When Paul Bracken joined Estuary Housing Association in 2018 as Director of ICT and Digital Business Transformation, his objective was to modernise IT services. He immediately recognised that the ageing infrastructure was a weak point.

"We had an ambition to go on a digital journey, but with a small team that is focused on simply keeping the system running, with infrastructure and desktop support, updates and patches, it's very difficult to drive through a new vision," he said. "We needed a core platform that would build the foundations for that journey and take away the pain of managing ageing hardware."

Estuary Housing Association had two choices – either appoint a provider to perform a complete upgrade of the existing infrastructure, or outsource to a managed service partner.

"We were at a fork in the road and I conducted a full infrastructure review, looking at available options in terms of cost, value for money and potential return-on-investment," says Paul Bracken. "As a housing association it is vital that we get the best possible value from what we are putting in place," he explained.

“**CDW is a huge organisation but we never for a moment felt any less important than any of its blue-chip customers. The pre-sales team were fantastic in designing a solution that worked for us; they took the time to understand what we needed.**”

– Paul Bracken, Director of ICT and Digital Business Transformation at Estuary Housing Association

SOLUTION

Estuary Housing Association began with an assessment of providers. "We were looking for organisations that could deliver end-to-end support," said Paul Bracken. "Looking at projects undertaken at other housing associations, CDW was a name that kept coming up."

CDW developed a strategic integrated solution that would address the two requirements of Estuary Housing Association: firstly establishing a more stable platform with the scope to be supported efficiently, and secondly delivering greater flexibility to enable the provision of new apps and services in the future.

CDW's own cloud platform, ServiceWorks, was identified as the best possible option. CDW's hosted cloud service is underpinned by three highly advanced data centres which enable seamless delivery of IT services. By moving to this platform, Estuary Housing Association could move services directly from its old infrastructure to the new environment, without incurring the cost and complexity of reshaping apps and software services from a full public cloud migration.

"It was a huge cultural change for an organisation so accustomed to on-premises

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infrastructure," said Ross Pedder, Head of Cloud Services Sales at CDW. "We invited the team at Estuary Housing Association to visit our state-of-the-art Service & Network Operations Centre in Peterborough, so they could see for themselves both the technology and the support teams their applications and workloads would depend on. From that point they knew they could trust us implicitly and recognised the value they could derive from a different cost and delivery model."

Having followed the G-Cloud public sector procurement framework, a robust and fully compliant contract was quickly agreed.

CDW's specialist team of Solutions Architects brought significant technical understanding to the development of the new environment. The ServiceWorks solution provided the organisation with on-demand capacity, enabling them to scale their infrastructure up or down with predictable economics. Looking

to the future, the association also gained an ability to quickly deploy new apps or services by adding virtual machines based on a simple rate card.

CDW played an integral role in supporting the migration, helping the IT team at Estuary Housing Association through a rigorous step-by-step process of prerequisites before transferring services, all within a time-scale of around four months.

Additionally, as part of the project, CDW assisted in migrating Estuary Housing Association from Windows 7 and Microsoft 2010 to Windows 10 and Microsoft Office 365, enabling enhanced collaboration and productivity of employees. The latest Citrix desktop services were also introduced to drive the adoption of agile working practices across the organisation.

OUTCOME

The migration to ServiceWorks has had a positive impact and has been recognised throughout the whole organisation.

"ServiceWorks is a best-of-breed solution that provides us with a stable, core platform moving forward and removes the headache of infrastructure management so that we can focus on our digital transformation plans," said Paul Bracken. "Everything in ServiceWorks is spelled out clearly with a menu of options so you can tailor and cost it appropriately for your business needs."

The return-on-investment has been clearly demonstrated. "The ROI for us is that we have been able to deliver a rapid transformation of our infrastructure within a matter of months, and without needing to recruit additional internal resources," he said.

Feedback from the workforce has been encouraging, with improvements in user experience being reported from all areas of the organisation.

The completion of the project has also underlined the business value of the organisation's IT function, which is now working on increasing remote working capabilities so that employees can record and share information regardless of their location. There are additional ambitions to create new apps providing residents with easier access to information regarding

their living arrangements and care plans.

"We're pleased to have worked with CDW in a true partnership approach," said Paul Bracken. "It's very important to us that this was a combined effort, with two organisations working collaboratively side-by-side, and that's exactly what we experienced. CDW is a huge organisation but we never for a moment felt any less important than any of its blue-chip customers. The Integrated Technology team were fantastic in designing a solution that worked for us; they took the time to understand what we needed. From there, the transition was very well managed and hand-off points were good."

CDW is now working with Estuary Housing Association on the adoption of a unified communications system to replace its existing aged telephony system and is also having discussions around how Estuary can tap in to additional CDW support offerings that complement its internal support team.

Penny Williams, Public Sector Sales Director at CDW, added: "Like many organisations, Estuary Housing Association was struggling with the demands of managing ageing infrastructure. We're delighted not only to have taken away that burden but to have provided a modern and scalable platform for exciting innovations in the future."

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For more information or to discuss your requirements, speak to CDW:

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