

Creating a housing association solution to power a transformation



CLARION
HOUSING GROUP

Clarion Housing Group is the largest housing association in the country, owning and managing 125,000 homes across over 170 local authorities.

“It’s been great working with my colleagues in Hitachi Solutions. We’ve had a great relationship and there’s a lot of pride in the solution we’ve built that’s a first in the housing association world.”

Linda Howard, Head of Process Design, Clarion Housing Group

A programme to reimagine how housing associations operate

In 2014, Affinity Sutton (later to become Clarion Housing Group) embarked on a large-scale transformation programme that would affect every aspect of its business. The scope of the project was huge, covering everything from how Clarion Housing Group worked, to the services it offered its customers. In order to bring this transformation to life, Clarion Housing Group needed a technology platform that would replace over 25 disparate systems with a technology platform that would underpin Clarion Housing Group’s reimagining of how it interacted with its customers and managed its properties.

The programme kicked off with 18 months of rigorous planning as Clarion Housing Group mapped out what its processes should look like and how it wanted to provide services. This was translated into high-level system processes. At this point, Hitachi Solutions joined Clarion Housing Group’s transformational journey, winning the tender to become its technology provider. Clarion Housing Group was impressed by the strong and effective engagement it had with Hitachi Solutions’ team during the pre-sales process, and the thinking it outlined about how it could support Clarion Housing Group’s technology adoption.

Hitachi Property Management supports the key functions of a housing association, covering rent setting, service charges, asset creation, asset management, planned programmes of works, financial operations, securitisation, warranty management, and back and front office integration.

Extending Microsoft's technology for housing

Hitachi Solutions and Clarion Housing Group began an intensive two years of systems development. Hitachi Solutions carried out research to support its understanding of the challenge, shadowing a diverse range of Clarion Housing Group employees from caretakers through to repair operatives. With so much to achieve, close collaboration was key.

The system brings the Customer Engagement and Finance & Operations components of Microsoft Dynamics 365 together with Hitachi Property Management (HPM). HPM enhances Microsoft's standard functionality and provides some functions critical for housing associations, including rent setting, service charges, asset creation, asset management, planned programmes of works, financial operations, securitisation, warranty management, and back and front office integration.

Halfway through the project a merger between the project instigator, Affinity Sutton Group and Circle Housing took place to form Clarion Housing Group. This added extra complexity to the project.

A platform ready for the future

Currently, half of the business — representing the ex-Affinity Sutton properties, customers and employees — is operating on the new platform. The remaining half, from ex-Circle Housing, will migrate over by the end of the year, bringing the total user count to over 3,000. As the platform continues to bed in, the organisation expects to have a much deeper and more granular level of information about its customers and properties, indeed achieving a 360-degree view for the first time that will better inform decision-making.

Multiple benefits are expected once the whole organisation is using the same platform. Clarion Housing Group anticipates that the solution will particularly increase the effectiveness of its customer service. For example, direct debit requests can already be set-up on first contact with the customer, whereas this used to involve different systems and departments, taking multiple days.

The company plans to leverage the solution to drive its position as a forerunner in the housing market and a leader in technology. Hitachi Solutions is proud of how it has helped Clarion Housing Group to bring its vision to life and of the solution it has built based on Hitachi Property Management and Microsoft Dynamics 365.

"We wanted this transformation project to change the way we work and the services we offer, and we needed a system that would enable it. It was never a pure technology project."

Catrin Jones, Director of Business Transition, Clarion Housing Group

Contact details

Hitachi Solutions Europe, Ltd.
11th Floor, Tower 42
25 Old Broad Street
London EC2N 1HQ
UK
+44 (0)203 1985 136

Why Hitachi Solutions

Hitachi Solutions is one of the largest, most qualified and highly experienced Microsoft Dynamics consulting firms across the globe, capable of handling complex tier-one displacement projects. Our company's calibre of expertise and commitment to customers is evidenced through our consistent recognition from both Microsoft and industry analysts.

Contact a Hitachi Solutions expert to discuss how our Microsoft Dynamics Solutions can help improve your productivity.