



Cardiff Council transforms community living schemes with Appello

Background

Cardiff Council is responsible for nine supported community living schemes across the region, these schemes provide sheltered accommodation for older and vulnerable people. Its portfolio of sustainable homes enables older people to live independently in the community for longer, truly improving the welfare and safety of residents.

Appello has provided its digital telecare offering, Smart Living Solutions (SLS), to two of Cardiff's schemes since December 2019. SLS is a suite of digital independent living solutions that integrate safety and wellbeing technologies into homes, including a wall mounted tablet, that provides digital video and audio capabilities, to a digitally enabled monitoring centre.

Meeting digital demand

As part of Cardiff's Capital Ambition Programme, a five-year vision created by the council outlining improvements to the city to ensure that it becomes a leading city on the world stage, it was due to refurbish a number of its community living schemes across the region.

As some of the sites required significant refurbishments, the council decided that it was a good opportunity to look at upgrading the existing telecare provision across all of the schemes under its authority.

This decision was driven by the council's response to the 2025 digital switchover whereby BT is planning to switch off the analogue telephony network. While this might seem like a future issue, the switch to the new all-IP network is already on a phased roll out. And, analogue telecare systems are beginning to show signs that they will cease to work well ahead of the mid-decade switchover. Our research has found that approximately 10% of first time calls from an analogue alarm fail over a digital telecoms networks.

As a result, when Cardiff met with its previous supplier it asked if it could meet its requirement for a digital option. The supplier offered a price for its solution that wasn't competitive and it also disclosed that it didn't have the technology at that point in time to go fully digital.

Cardiff decided to commence work with one complex upgrade, using this supplier. However, it soon became apparent that the project incurred hidden costs and it was clear the solution on offer was not future proof. As a result, Cardiff decided to start looking for other digital telecare providers for the upgrade.

Finding the right provider

In 2019 Cardiff went out to market to find a new digital telecare supplier. It needed a solution that not only adhered to its Capital Ambition Strategy, but also one that met its requirements and was a truly end-to-end digital solution.

During this process Cardiff discovered that there were only a few suppliers

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who offered truly end-to-end digital systems, and not all of these had the necessary accreditations needed to ensure the system was safe for residents.

The ultimate decision by evidence that the system worked and could accommodate its requirements. In late 2019 Cardiff selected Appello and its SLS system, as it met Cardiff's requirements around safety accreditation and functionality where the other suppliers could not.

A seamless transition

The first implementation of SLS took place on its Clos-y-Nant site and was completed by Appello in December 2019. It took a few weeks to complete and the second site, Brentwood, was completed in February 2020.

Richard Ferguson, Senior Technical Manager at Cardiff Council said of the implementation process: "Upgrading

Smart Living Solutions Cardiff Council



to any new system can be stressful, and we need to consider the needs and safety of our residents as well. The installation happened over Christmas time and I was aware we were going to be on skeleton staff. However, the move went seamlessly and the residents were not impacted at all. Everything went smoothly and it's still working well today."

Rising to the monitoring challenge

Cardiff were keen to keep all of its telecare monitoring in-house. However, there was an issue connecting Appello's SLS digital suite into the Cardiff monitoring system, as it was only set up for analogue monitoring, using closed protocols.

Cardiff had to upgrade to enable the monitoring of the new digital telecare solutions. However, they faced a problem. How to provide interim monitoring while the upgrade commences, ensuring a continuity of service for its residents?

The answer? Appello took possession of Cardiff's monitoring at its own digital

monitoring centre, the largest in the UK, while Cardiff upgraded its own call handling system. Guaranteeing a seamless customer experience and the safety of its residents.

Reaping the benefits of digital telecare

John Israel, Business and Operations Manager at Cardiff Council commented on Cardiff's relationship with Appello: "The experience has been good from the very start, right through to the installation.

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The SLS solution offers a wide range of benefits for residents, including room-to-room video calling, video door entry and improved audio quality. There is also a clear safety advantage as the digital connection offers reduced call connection times to the monitoring centre, which is critical in an emergency situation.

Lessons and next steps for Cardiff Council

Once the first site at Cardiff was up and running it ran an assessment of the residents who occupy the site, to collect feedback on the system. They identified that because of hearing difficulties, some residents were having difficult hearing the alarm because the unit has to be fixed to a wall.

As a result, Appello suggested that Cardiff switch to a Bluetooth unit. This allows Cardiff to connect Bluetooth speakers so that residents that might struggle to hear the wall-mounted unit can hear alarms and doors calls wherever they are in the property. This Bluetooth unit can also benefit residents with mobility issues, as they can be given an easy to use fob which allows them to open the front door.

With the first install at Clos-y-Nant and Brentwood successfully completed, Cardiff and Appello are now progressing with the rollout at its seven other supported community living schemes in the region.