



Blackpool Coastal Housing find 'long-term, adaptable' digital solution with Appello

Introduction

Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) provides sheltered accommodation in 20 schemes across Blackpool, Lancashire. As an organisation they drive to deliver an excellent standard of housing to their customers and empower their staff and customers, in their work and lives.

In 2019, BCH teamed up with Appello to make their first moves towards introducing digital warden call and telecare equipment into their sheltered housing stock, with the market leading digital suite, Smart Living Solutions (SLS).

In this short interview with Denise Williams, Head of Support and Anthony Walker, Mechanical and Electrical Officer at Blackpool Coastal Housing, we discuss their drivers and experiences to date and look at how the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the benefits of moving to digital telecare.

You introduced Smart Living Solution just prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, have you found this to be beneficial in your response to the pandemic?

Yes, the use of digital tools whether directly or indirectly has proven of almost fundamental importance for communication and access to

services in the current climate and the Appello SLS warden call system has had many benefits.

Appello SLS, gives us the ability to use a tablet for offsite phone and video calls with our residents, offering a more inclusive service as our sheltered officers cover more than one scheme. The current climate has encouraged staff to think more about technology and how this can better meet the needs of the service in the future.

What were your initial drivers for BCH moving to digital telecare?

We are aware of the digital changes to the telecoms network and the impact on analogue services, so we knew our previous system was becoming outdated. We were keen for any replacement system to provide us with a good basis for ensuring longer term compatibility with the developing digital environment.

What were the reasons for selecting Appello and Smart Living Solutions?

Due to the fast-developing nature of digital warden call systems, we wanted to ensure that the system we put in place would provide us with a long-term solution. We looked at a variety of digital warden call systems but the Appello SLS

system seemed to be the most adaptable, up to date systems available with clear upgrade plans.

Whilst looking into digital warden call systems we concluded that the ability to install different types of assistive applications to support a resident's health and wellbeing was of paramount importance and the Appello SLS system provided this crucial feature.

“

We were keen for any replacement system to provide us with a good basis for ensuring longer term compatibility with the developing digital environment.

Anthony Walker, Mechanical and Electrical Officer Manager at Blackpool Coastal Housing

”

How have staff and customers found the switch to the new system?

The system has a very intuitive, easy to use interface, which has proved of huge advantage in making

Smart Living Solutions Blackpool Coastal Housing



the switch almost seamless, the addition of numerous new features such as video calling, remote calling via a tablet and the 'I'm ok' feature has enabled us to work more efficiently.

Despite our initial concerns over whether residents would find the new technology confusing, this has not been the case and they have adapted very quickly, praising the new features such as video door entry, assistive applications and the I'm OK feature.

Do you see video becoming more important to your organisation and communicating with residents?

Yes, video calling puts a face to a remote contact, it allows customers to see a smile, to offer a person and not just a voice. During COVID-19 we found some customers may not see anyone whilst confined to their flats, seeing someone rather than just hearing a voice offers more comfort, it has a greater impact on someone's well-being.

From an operational perspective it allows the sheltered officers to have visual view of the individual, be able to check mobility, check wellbeing, see the property condition. It could also be useful if customers have an issue in the flat such as a repair, they will be able to show the officer rather than just trying to explain.

We were keen for any replacement system to provide us with a good basis for ensuring longer term compatibility with the developing digital environment.

Anthony Walker, Mechanical and Electrical Officer Manager at Blackpool Coastal Housing

What are the plans for BCH moving forward with digital telecare and technology in supported housing in general?

Our plans are focussed on the ongoing replacement of existing analogue systems with digital solutions to support a more adaptable and fluid way of working that enhances the support we provide to our more vulnerable residents.

COVID-19 has pushed the need for this type of technology forward. Whilst we always wanted to go down this route, the pandemic situation has made it more important for the development of sheltered services.



Blackpool Coastal
Housing