



EBOOK

# 5 Areas In Which Digital Innovation Can Transform Housing Services

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Using technology to drive efficiency and customer satisfaction during a time of continued budget pressures.



## Introduction

The housing sector is on a trajectory of rapid change along with a growing requirement for Housing organisations to streamline, automate and digitalise the delivery of services. Furthermore, with central funding frozen, and benefit payments to clients similarly capped, housing departments must create operational efficiencies to cover any financial shortfalls.

The crisis we are now fronting means new attitudes are required to combat this business change for the better. Housing organisations looking to bring services in-house are perfectly placed to drive and accelerate this change. Change however won't be limited to newly created services, technology has jumped forward and the rules have changed - we all have an opportunity to re-think the fundamentals of service delivery.

### **So, the question arises - how do we transform service delivery and enable an improved customer experience?**

Advances in technology offer opportunities to create these efficiencies, and improve the services provided to its tenants and partners alike. Digital transformation programs use these advances to fundamentally change the way a housing department works, using smart technology investments to streamline and refocus the services offered.

These efficiencies will directly translate into operational cost savings, improvements in productivity, and when deployed correctly, increases in customer satisfaction. Housing departments are also utilising advances in mobility and remote working technology to support the changes in modern working practices, this even applies to traditional 'HQ' activities like call centre functions.

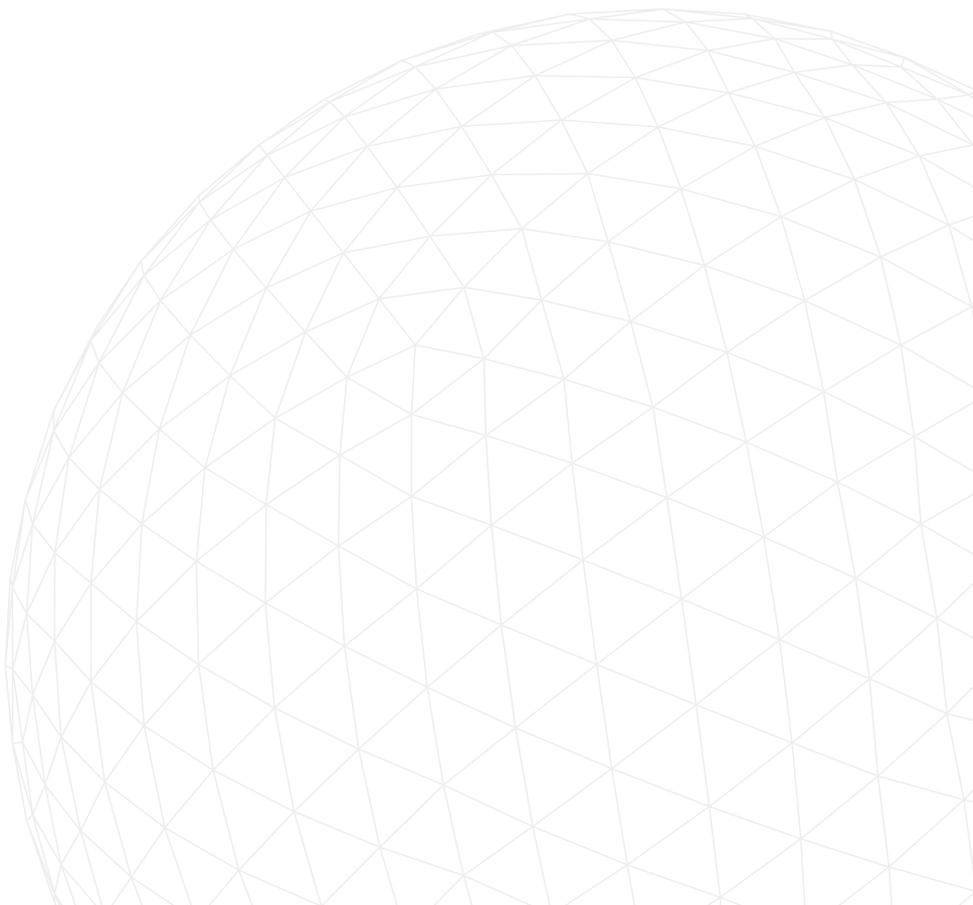
### **We focus on 5 areas, where technology can drive maximum return in your**

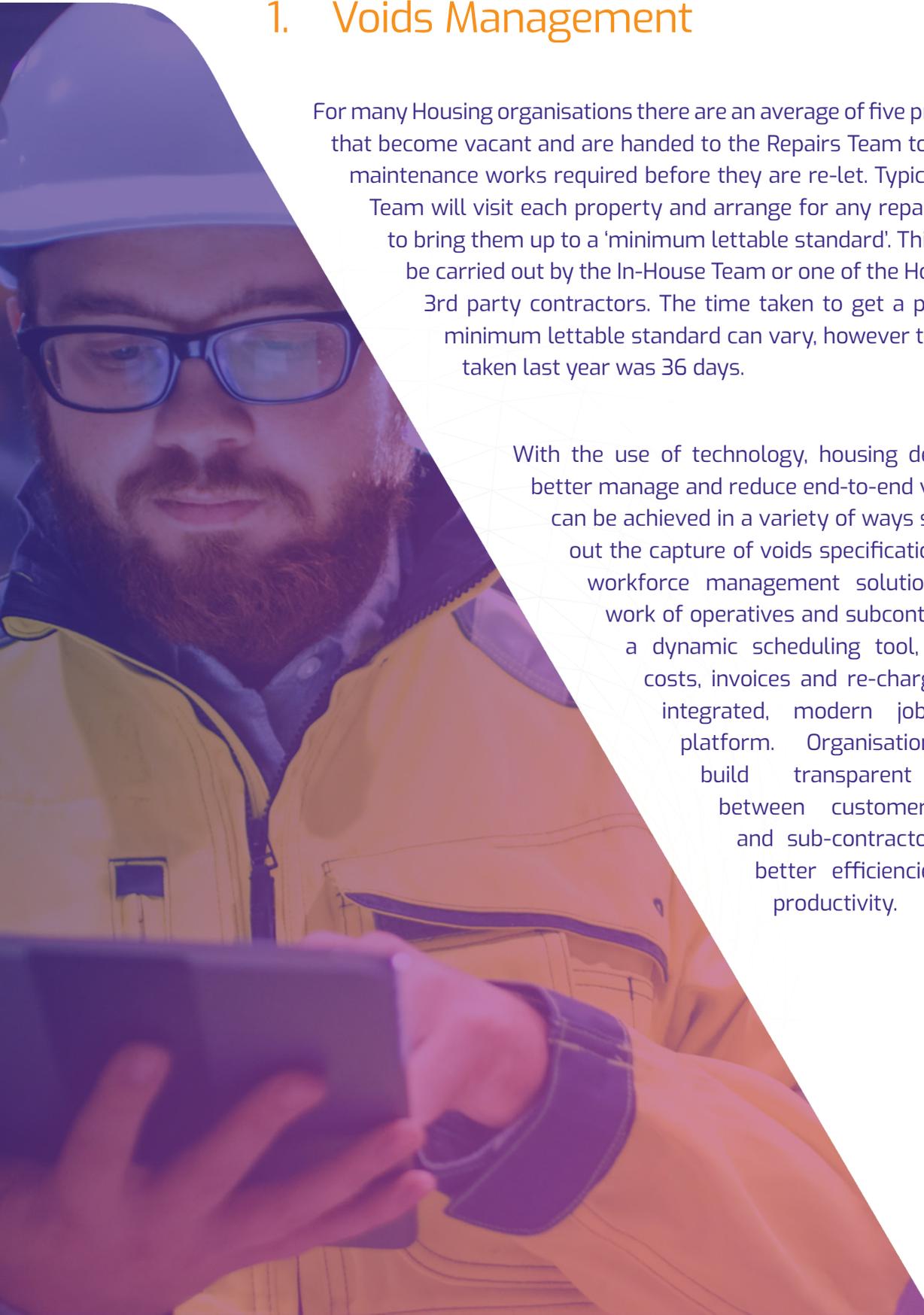
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## 1. Voids Management

For many Housing organisations there are an average of five properties a week that become vacant and are handed to the Repairs Team to inspect for any maintenance works required before they are re-let. Typically, the Repairs Team will visit each property and arrange for any repair works needed to bring them up to a 'minimum lettable standard'. This work will then be carried out by the In-House Team or one of the Housing providers 3rd party contractors. The time taken to get a property back to minimum lettable standard can vary, however the average time taken last year was 36 days.

With the use of technology, housing departments can better manage and reduce end-to-end voids times. This can be achieved in a variety of ways such as carrying out the capture of voids specifications via a mobile workforce management solution, allocate the work of operatives and subcontractors through a dynamic scheduling tool, and managing costs, invoices and re-charges with a fully integrated, modern job management platform. Organisations can also build transparent relationships between customers, contractors and sub-contractors, resulting in better efficiencies and greater productivity.

One of the main benefits is the ability to co-ordinate your workforce through intelligent scheduling meaning you are able to send the most appropriate person, in a nearby location, to the right job at the right time.

In addition to assisting with planning, the use of technology also permits a great deal of flexibility: allowing supervisors to allocate work or enabling your workforce to create appointments and schedule work for themselves for the same day on their mobile device.

Not only does this help reduce the mileage of your mobile workers (which equals fuel savings) but it'll also help you to increase the number of jobs completed per day. Voids management software helps your departments work together, from your workforce completing a survey, your call centre re-routing appropriate teams to immediately updating accounts.

It is this integrated approach that offers you one view of all processes, providing you with a seamless way of reviewing data, which allows your voids to be fit for purpose sooner.

## 2. Disrepair & Compliance

Regulatory compliance within housing departments is one of the most important areas for Housing organisations to get right. From protecting tenants to maintaining the confidence of lenders and driving investment decisions, it is a major responsibility.

Recent investigations have seen the increase of disrepair in social housing. This has led to an influx of housing tenants campaigning and complaining that mould, damp and lack of heating is affecting their health, while they are staying in uncomfortable living conditions. Housing organisations are therefore under pressure to provide an efficient repairs service to their tenants, while trying to tackle the increase of compensation based legal claims.

This has resulted in many housing associations and social landlords starting to look at new technologies to monitor disrepair remotely, reduce paper-based processes and use data from sensors to detect issues in advance. Not only will this save time and capacity from a workforce perspective, but it also ensures all evidence is recorded and enhances the volume and quality of data should a case be brought to court.

Today, technology is ever evolving, and the introduction of modern, intuitive housing repairs solutions are now an enabler to deliver a high standard of service delivery while remaining compliant and responding quickly and effectively to repairs jobs.

Technology such as mobile workforce management, dynamic scheduling, IoT and job management solutions can accurately help repairs' teams capture information from each visit and prove that the repairs were carried out. It could be a case that repairs staff have turned up but haven't been able to gain access to a property. These failed attempts are logged which show the worker tried to gain access, and proof of attendance is recorded.

IoT sensor technology can proactively monitor temperature and humidity in their tenants' property and rectify any disrepair issues occurring before they escalate. The benefits of sensor technology have the potential to far outweigh the costs of numerous legal challenges and claims.

Sensors are able to monitor the tenant's living environment, gathering data, detecting if there is a risk, notifying the organisation and enabling jobs to be proactively created to tackle the issues before they escalate into a more significant problem.

Additionally, data from the sensors will provide insight into damp issues which could be used to educate and prevent black mould forming. It can also provide evidence to support the defence by highlighting that proactive actions were attempted or taken that helps alleviate blame. Furthermore, when the sensors are deployed, they will also give an indication of fuel poverty by alerting the relevant stakeholders if the temperature in the property is below a certain level.

By implementing technology, Housing organisations can ensure all information is easily accessed and documented appropriately. Information such as completed visits, photos and signatures are accurately captured ensuring housing associations are in a better position to show compliance and defend themselves against claims.

### 3. Responsive Repairs

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## 4. First-Time Fix Rates

First-time fix rate is a really useful metric. Not only does it help reduce operational costs and maximise workforce capacity, but there is a strong link between first-time fix rates and customer satisfaction. There are many causes of poor first-time fix rates, but the main cause can be attributed to limited access to the right information at the right time, that enables operatives to complete their work effectively.

Let's take the common example of a field worker who arrives on site and assesses a job... they find they haven't got the correct equipment, materials or skills they need to complete the job leaving them no other option but to leave and arrange another visit. Clearly this is not only a waste of resource, but an incredible poor experience for the service user.

Another cause of this can be incorrect items being delivered for a particular job, or the job is completed to an unsatisfactory standard, or perhaps the operative is unable to finish it on the first visit due to time pressures imposed by their schedule.

These repeat visits can be the result of administrative mistakes due to ineffective and outdated processes, or simply the lack of technology that enables a field worker to be fully informed and equipped prior to starting a job.

Implementing a digital workforce management system can help to reduce these problems. Jobs/Visits can be logged onto the job management system, providing a holistic view of requirements, these jobs can then be scheduled and allocated to operatives in the field with the correct skills. With all the details of the job known before the visit operative can prepare in advance and ensure they have all the materials and equipment necessary to complete the job first time.

The use of cloud-based video diagnostics can even enable potential jobs to be remotely triaged and prioritised, without sending an operative to a resident's home for an initial assessment. This enables the housing department to reduce unnecessary jobs, minimise face-to-face contact, better prioritise emergency visits and in some instances instruct tenants how to complete simple fixes themselves.

The use of dashboards will provide clear visibility of work being carried out and work which is completed. This empowers Housing organisations to become more efficient at scheduling workloads and enables reporting at a much more detailed level.

## 5. Customer Satisfaction

Resident satisfaction and good customer service are perhaps the most critical metric for all high performing Housing departments. Over the last number of years, many organisations have discovered that the expectations of their customer base are increasing exponentially.

Customers are now expecting that services are not only provided to the highest quality and in a timely manner, but also expect additional flexibility to suit their requirements and are less likely to be forgiving of miscommunications and low quality or missed work.

However, as these expectations continue to rise, organisations often find their approach to job management is not developing at a rate to satisfy customer demand.

The lack of innovation, capabilities and even the fundamental approach of many existing job management systems, restricts how services can be delivered leading to processes quickly becoming outdated as working environments inevitably change. This means that organisations inevitably end up delivering services that are not fit for purpose, falling short of customer expectations, and leading to longer term implications.

When this is combined with the challenge of navigating continuous budgetary pressures, strict compliance requirements and increasing demand on service, more providers are looking at how they can take a modernised approach to job management to help them meet their business objectives.

There is a wealth of issues on which residents may need to engage with the housing organisation, all of which have varying levels of urgency and importance. The 'product' being provided is also central to an individual's life – housing is so closely tied to so many aspects of well-being and welfare.

The use of technology is key when it comes to enabling your Housing organisation to deliver a superior level of customer service. Implementing a mobile workforce software can minimise the amount of time staff need to spend logging and planning maintenance requests from residents.

The technology cannot only provide customers with the ability to book repairs appointments easier and faster, and at a time that is convenient for them but also allows the Housing organisation to stay in touch with tenants and update them on the status of their work.

Jobs can then be automatically assigned to workers who have the correct skills, materials and resources to hand.

With the use of the correct technology the capabilities of a solution could also provide each worker with contextual job information to consider beforehand, while operational dashboards enable management to monitor ongoing work and ensure that residents are receiving the highest quality of service.

Job Management systems can also bring Asset Management directly into the heart of the repairs process, providing asset visibility and enabling real-time updates directly from job activity.

Furthermore, technology can enable your Housing organisation to have better control over your costs, improve workforce productivity and enhance visibility of performance. All, in turn, can help to drive an improved customer service.

## Looking Towards The Future Of Housing Services...

By taking a more forward-looking approach to the deployment of technology, your housing department will be able to better manage ongoing work, monitor job progress and identify any risks, as they occur all while delivering a higher standard of customer service.

The outcome of this leads to a range of benefits for not only the organisation, but also staff themselves and importantly, the service user.

- **Compliance with standards** – enhanced control and increased visibility of the job management process means that risks can be identified and dealt with early, ensuring that the right services are delivered at the right time, while meeting all required standards
- **Workforce productivity** – streamlining processes and automating admin means field workers have more time to spend delivering quality services every day
- **Service Efficiency** – through improved visibility and control of operational costs, organisations can closely track expenditure to ensure an efficient service is being delivered, while identifying areas of inefficient spend and increasing profits
- **Customer Satisfaction** – by delivering services when they are required, enhancing first time fixes and improving communication with customers, satisfaction of service delivery is increased

Digital transformation is not a one-time fix, it is a journey and housing providers should look at the deployment of technology as something that will enable continuous improvements. In order to do this Housing organisations must look to work with technology providers that can provide the ability to continue to support them as they scale.

This will help prevent organisations encountering the problem of disjointed, complex IT infrastructure that can impact upon the delivery of service.

Totalmobile provide a range of solutions that enable housing organisations to experience the continual transformation and improvement of services. Offering capabilities including:

- **Mobile Work Order Management**
- **Field Service Management**
- **Dynamic scheduling and field service dashboards**
- **Asset management inspection software**
- **Lone worker protection**
- **Video diagnostic technology**

Totalmobile provide market leading technology, combined with significant experience and a deep understanding of the Housing sector. That's why we are trusted by over 150 housing providers across the UK and Ireland...



### **What's Next?**

For more information on how technology can drive and enhance the quality and efficiency of service delivery across your organisation,

please visit <https://www.totalmobile.co.uk/software/insight-field-service-analytics/> or contact us via the details on the back of this document.



# Totalmobile

Totalmobile is market leader in field service and mobile workforce management technology, helping organisations deliver more service, of the highest quality and at reduced cost.

Our SaaS based software provides a range of innovative products that deliver a step change in field service performance, mobile worker empowerment and management control.

This unlocks transformative cost savings, capacity gains, productivity improvements and empowers allows mobile workers to focus on consistently delivering the best service.

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