

Gap Analysis Report

1.	SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT	1
2.	STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS AND FEEDBACK.....	2
3.	GAPS IN THE CURRENT SYSTEMS	4
	• TOO MANY SYSTEMS.....	4
	• INTEGRATION ISSUES BETWEEN SYSTEMS.....	5
	• SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES ARE NOT CUSTOMER-FOCUSED	5
	• LABOUR INTENSIVE PROCESSES	5
	• REPORTING & MANAGEMENT TOOLS ARE LIMITED	6
	• MOBILE WORKING NOT WELL-SUPPORTED	6
	• LOW GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH SYSTEMS	6

1. SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT

- 1.1 This document summarises the stakeholder consultation activities to-date and uses the results of these to identify key gaps and inefficiencies in the current IT system infrastructure used by Tenant Services.
- 1.2 Analysis has been carried out into the gaps between the Council's current housing systems provision and requirements. Consultation have taken place with users and managers across Tenant Services and the wider Council. Feedback from Tenant Representatives has also been incorporated. This report has been updated in 2019 to include further feedback from a 2018 Ark Health Check of Tenant Services, a 2019 Survey of staff use of Northgate and following recent project developments in the service.
- 1.3 The main gaps and inefficiencies in the current system set-up have been identified as:
- Integration issues between systems
 - Too many systems
 - Lack of customer relationship management/ customer-focus
 - Labour intensive processes
 - Reporting and performance management tools are limited
 - Mobile-working is not well supported
 - Low general staff satisfaction with the systems
 - Poor value for money and a lack of confidence in the main system

2.4 Staff and Managers were then asked to identify what each team requires from an IT system and then rank these requirements in order of priority. The top priority requirements were identified as:

- The system should be user-friendly, stream-lined, simple to use and it should be quick and easy to update. There should be greater automation for repetitive common tasks.
- There should be an overview of all activity/ communication with a customer from across teams. This should have a good audit trail and CRM functionality. The system should be future-proof to allow channel shifting and new ways of communication with tenants.
- There should be single data entry and one system for all across the teams. All information should be held in one place with one version of the truth.
- It should be easy and quick to report from the system. Managers should be provided with the information they need to monitor staff performance and staff should be provided with access to information to that they are self-sufficient and able to monitor their own workloads. They should be better reporting to allow richer and more intelligent insight.
- The system should work for us and our processes, not for the supplier. The technology should allow flexible and mobile working from different devices.
- The system should interface effectively with all other services, systems and departments that it needs to (rather than manual data loads from other systems).

2.5 In 2018 a Health Check of Tenant Services was carried out by Ark Consultants. The Health Check consulted with Service Managers, Front-line staff and peer managers from across the service and the Council. The findings of the health check were broad and touched on many aspects of how Tenant Services Operates. One key section outlined Systems and Processes. Front-line staff scored Systems and Processes as 'Poor'. The key issues that were identified were:

- Staff feel existing processes and systems are not supporting efficient delivery
- Staff highlighted weaknesses in ICT as a significant barrier. Issues included a lack of system integration and a need to up-skill the workforce on using current systems
- Staff were not confident that there was capacity within the Council to improve the ICT infrastructure
- Staff are concerned about the manual nature of systems and processes used to manage compliance

2.6 In 2019 a survey of staff was carried out to assess their use of the current Housing Management System. Many staff comments through the survey can be grouped into three broad areas of frustration:

- **MANUAL INTERVENTIONS:** Staff and Managers commented on the manual old-fashioned nature of many common tasks and processes within the system. The system should be able to easily automate these tasks and staff should be able to track processes and workloads that are automated. Staff identified that this would save them time and effort and reduce work-arounds.
- **DIFFICULT TO USE:** Many staff commented that the system was 'clumsy' and difficult to navigate and that they would like quicker and easier access to the relevant information without having to click through many different screens. Staff identified that simple and modern search and navigation functionality would save time and make their job easier.
- **REPORTING FROM SYSTEM NOT EASY:** Staff would like to have access to more useful reporting and for reports to be quicker to produce.

"I'd like to be able to use Northgate more quickly and efficiently especially when using it during 'Pod' sessions. I sometimes find it difficult to pick up information

about the progress of a reported repair... Printing transaction information is very long-winded. I've resorted to doing a screen print as a get around on occasions."

"I would like to be able to change tenant contact details from the front page...ie telephone numbers. It would save time to be able to set up reports where you could just click an action and it would run."

"My suggestion for the system is the production of user friendly reports, with the amalgamation of records from various screens. The system needs to be more intuitive with Improved interfaces and accurate real time data. This would benefit the team as Individuals would be able to produce their own reports and it would make more efficient/effective utilisation of the system."

"I find the system quite clunky and not user friendly. It should be easier to use, more customer friendly and with better reporting functions that everyone can pull off."

- 2.7 In 2019 feedback from our Tenant Representatives highlighted issues with the current online tenant portal. Particularly frustrating was the lack of functionality to report a repair and review/ select repair appointments at a time to suit the tenant. Equally frustrating was the lack of integration with other parts of the Council - our tenants want to be able to view their rent accounts alongside council tax and benefits claims as well as report repairs and make payments. One tenant described their expectations of a future council portal/app as: *"A one stop shop for all the main priorities"*.

3. GAPS IN THE CURRENT SYSTEMS

- 3.1 Feedback from stakeholders has been used to identify critical gaps which exist in the current IT infrastructure. The Council must deliver services to tenants and the community which are value-for-money, accessible and customer-focused. In this respect there are gaps between IT provision and requirements.

TOO MANY SYSTEMS

- 3.2 In order to perform the day-to-day tasks of a housing provider, Officers have to use multiple housing-related systems as well as numerous other council systems. This causes a huge duplication of effort as well as requiring training, set up and maintenance of multiple systems. There are currently at least 9 housing-related systems and databases in use:

- Northgate – housing management
- Keystone – asset management
- Clik – repairs scheduling
- Information@work – document management
- Tenants Online – basic tenant portal
- Business objects – data reporting
- Esendex – tenant text communications
- ASB database – managing ASB cases
- BARIS – contractor interface

- 3.3 Some parts of these systems are nearing end-of-life and are becoming unsupported by suppliers. This means the Council either risks running its housing function on unsupported systems, or it must pay for the replacement modules from suppliers.

INTEGRATION ISSUES BETWEEN SYSTEMS

- 3.4 Information is stored across multiple systems that are not integrated and also in spreadsheets, personal folders and Outlook accounts, resulting in:
- A lack of integration and information sharing between service areas, which leads to unnecessary work-arounds taking place and some double entry of information.
 - Inefficient services and wasted time, especially with Repairs staff spending time chasing information on planned works
 - Knowledge being stored locally and in spreadsheets in staff folders, and often being lost with staff turnover. This is a GDPR and data protection risk.
 - A poor self-serve experience for tenants and customers discourages tenants from self-serving. This not only results in a poor customer experience, it impacts on our ability to channel shift towards more cost-effective and efficient methods of delivering customer service.

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES ARE NOT CUSTOMER-FOCUSED

- 3.5 We currently have inadequate customer insight and customer relationship management. This results in an inability to provide a quality service and to respond to our customer's needs in a streamlined, efficient and consistent manner. Staff report sometimes feeling ill-equipped to respond to customer queries. There is no clear protocol for responding to or recording customer contact. Records of customer contact are stored locally or in disparate locations, if at all, leading to an inefficient service.
- 3.6 One of the main concerns is that there is no easy or consistent way of recording interactions with customers, with information being stored in different systems. As customer's expectations increase there is a risk that this will lead to greater levels of dissatisfaction with the service. It also means we have no audit trail or record on the system of what we have done to try to resolve complaints and issues.
- 3.7 In addition, we need a way of gathering insight on our customers through our day-to-day contact with them in order to identify support needs and make referrals. Ultimately tenants may not get the support they need due to lack of information sharing.

LABOUR INTENSIVE PROCESSES

- 3.8 Currently our systems do not facilitate efficient, streamlined and SMART working practices. Processes are longwinded and manual due to a lack of automation resulting in double-entry and clicking through many screens to carry out simple actions, such as updating customer contact information. This makes the service provided to customers less efficient, particularly in the Repairs service where the highest volume of customer contact takes place. This could be addressed through configuring workflows, especially for common daily tasks. Financial administration processes are manual and labour intensive and we currently are at-risk as all the knowledge of how to carry them out is held by one or two members of staff. We have insufficient tools, such as predictive arrears management tools linked to appropriate automated SMS messaging, available to respond to changes in welfare payment arrangements.

REPORTING & MANAGEMENT TOOLS ARE LIMITED

3.9 Reporting tools are limited, require expertise to use, are not very user-friendly and require expensive licenses to be bought for each user. This means that:

- Managers are not equipped with the information they need to help them effectively performance manage their service areas and staff
- Numbers of people with access to reporting tools is limited due to high costs of licenses
- Staff are unable to take responsibility for their own performance and productivity

MOBILE WORKING NOT WELL-SUPPORTED

3.10 Staff have smartphones but are unable to access or communicate with the systems whilst on site or with tenants. This leads to the generation of a great deal of paperwork and needless data entry and scanning putting a strain on the administrative service. It also makes the service provided to tenants less responsive.

LOW GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH SYSTEMS

3.11 There is long-standing dissatisfaction with the main housing system amongst staff. They feel it is unintuitive, “clunky” and old-fashioned – for all the reasons described above. This may be partly due to the fact that our systems were never fully implemented or resourced internally so we are not seeing the full potential of what the system can do. There are also aspects of the systems that cannot be changed, such as the fact that our main system it is modular and based on an old database platform whereas there are now systems being built on web-based platforms which are much better suited to the age in which we and our tenants now live.