

Nominee: Nottingham Community Housing Association

Nomination title: Proud to make a difference - ICT and its role in making better lives

Nottingham Community Housing Association - proud to make a difference

Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA) is one of the largest locally-based housing groups in the East Midlands, managing over 9,200 homes, housing more than 20,000 tenants, and providing care and support services to over 2000 service users. It is driven by the mission, “more homes + great services = better lives”.

Underpinning NCHA’s mission are the core values, which include:

- **Understanding our business and stakeholders**
- **Turning good services into great services**
- **Meeting customer and stakeholder needs**
- **Achieving quality solutions**
- **Staff working well together**
- **Innovation and adaptable to change**

Andrew Ginns, NCHA Head of Resources, commented: “Here at NCHA we understand the important role our ICT systems plays in achieving our mission whilst adhering to our values. We have the responsibility to provide a platform which will empower our members of staff to deliver great services to our customers and stakeholders.

As an organisation which exists for the benefit of the community, we have to ensure the investment we make in technology delivers tangible returns. And at the same time is secure, user friendly, resilient, and inherently reduces any risks.”

Already supporting over 1,100 members of staff, NCHA are currently undertaking substantial and ongoing growth plans. By the end of 2022 they will have developed an additional 1,500 new homes, bringing the total number of homes managed to in excess of 10,500, and will have provided over 800,000 hours of sustainable care and support to the most vulnerable people in society.

As a result of this planned growth, NCHA's ICT team have experienced a significant number of challenges.

The main challenge with the existing ICT infrastructure was the age of the technology being used, and the fact it was nearing capacity. Running at this level of density and age meant reliability issues were a cause for concern.

In addition, the back-up window was expanding and running into the operational window and had started to impact on performance and user experience.

Power capacity was an added complication. Adding additional hardware to their on premise data centre would have meant installing an on-site generator to manage supply.

Therefore NCHA set out to upgrade their private cloud and scale out to a secondary co-located site for disaster recovery purposes. By implementing this ICT infrastructure it would:

- Remove any inherent risk from the existing ICT Systems
- Improve security and compliance
- Provide the opportunity to innovate
- Improve efficiency and productivity
- Improve the level of customer service to the members of staff
- Future Proof the IT Systems
- Provide NCHA with predictable costs

Following a competitive tendering exercise, NCHA worked with their ICT Partner Axess Systems, and set about the challenge of designing and implementing a new hybrid cloud solution to assist with the application delivery of their private cloud, storage and co-location of their infrastructure for back-up and disaster recovery.

The final design used best of breed technology, and also repurposed existing hardware and licences wherever it was practical to do so. This provided a cost effective and efficient method of implementing a new ICT solution.

In order to build resilience, the new solution was based out of two sites; one within NCHA's own established private datacentre, and a further managed by Axess Systems on a co-location basis. The hardware was designed in such a way that it could remain fully resilient at either site, and without any one single point of failure throughout the entire solution.

The implemented design consists of Citrix XenApp, Citrix NetScaler, HP, NetApp, Veeam and Axess Systems Managed Cloud.

Since implementing the hybrid cloud solution NCHA are already seeing the benefits. These are:

- **Removal of risks from the previous ICT Systems**

By implementing a new Hybrid Cloud solution NCHA have removed the risk of a serious service interruption.

- **Improving efficiency and productivity**

One of the main benefits the ICT systems now have over the previous systems is the aid to improving efficiency and productivity.

Gaining visibility of performance and utilisation analytics data means NCHA are able to effectively predict growth patterns, network loads, regular trends and avoid any unscheduled downtime which means the systems can deliver better availability and more productivity.

- **Predictable Costs**

The new solution provides NCHA with a predictable cost base. This helps reduce business risk and any unforeseen expense through growing or scaling the systems.

- **Future proofing the business**

The new systems are designed to be scalable and meet the future needs of NCHA in a predictable fashion, without the need for a re-design or re-engineering.

- **Improving the level of service to members of staff**

The new ICT Systems enable the IT team to provide a more comprehensive level of service to their users. Quicker problem resolution will be achieved with more advanced reporting tools, along with the ability to support more end-user devices.

In addition, the new systems provide better visibility of how the IT infrastructure is performing in real time, and therefore NCHA are able to resolve issues before they become a problem.

Finally, members of staff can begin accessing their systems from any device, anywhere and at any time – with the added bonus of knowing that their services are fully resilient and always on.

Why nominee should win

- **Utilises innovative Cloud technology and technical services to create an ICT platform which will play an important role in helping NCHA achieve its mission, whilst adhering to core values.**
- **Project demonstrates how ICT provides a platform to deliver great services**
- **Cloud technologies have transformed the resilience of the ICT**
- **Increased efficiency and productivity of delivering the ICT service**
- **Demonstrates true collaboration between NCHA, Axess Systems, and technology vendors**