



Sandwell Council reduces costs and raises service levels with the Advanced Work Hub

When Sandwell Council introduced a new work management system, Work Hub, into its housing department, the software had a significant and positive impact on staff productivity, communication, service levels and costs.



Sandwell Council covers an area encompassing six different towns, with a total population of around 316,000 people. We provide a wide range of services, from education through to adult social care and social housing maintenance. To deliver these services we employ staff in a variety of roles, including contact centre advisors, planners, inspectors and neighbourhood repair officers.

Modernising an old back-office system

Our old back-office system held data used by council staff to meet the needs of citizens. Increasingly, however, this system was struggling to cope with the growing demands placed on us as a council. It would often crash, and we were losing crucial time in our already tight schedules. The old system also created a large amount of paperwork – with the associated environmental impact, duplicated data, increased admin and downtime. Some staff who needed to be out on the road to deliver services to our customers had to return to the office to collect paperwork first, which created additional work pressures.

These issues were particularly affecting our housing department, which is responsible for carrying out repairs to around 29,000 properties across the Sandwell area. Our contact centre

advisors, planners, property inspectors and trade staff all need to work together to repair and maintain tenants' homes. But, with the old system, staff couldn't trust the back-office system data. So, the council needed to find a way to:

- > Improve accuracy
- > Enhance communication and visibility
- > Ensure access to up-to-date information
- > Provide a reliable system that could connect all these elements together

Expanding the Advanced toolkit with Work Hub

We were already working with Advanced using its Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) and its Job Manager (mobile workforce software). These solutions provided a stable, reliable platform for field service management of housing repairs and maintenance, along with tenancy voids. So, when it came to purchasing a new back-office system, we turned to Advanced for expert support.

As Ryan Davis, our Senior Repairs Co-ordinator and Systems Officer, says, "We had already seen the capability of Job Manager. We thought bringing in another Advanced back-office solution, with Work Hub, would help close the

Client >

Sandwell Council

Sector >

Local government

Project >

Installing a new work management system

"The system we have got now is more reliable and staff are more productive. They don't need to visit the offices any more."

Neil Martin > Business Manager, Asset Management and Maintenance Service > Sandwell Council

Better informed tenants and improved service levels

"The relationship we've got with Advanced is a really good one. We are planning on developing our systems even further and widening the Work Hub to other services in Sandwell Council, so the relationship will just grow and grow."

Neil Martin > Business Manager, Asset Management and Maintenance Service > Sandwell Council

circle - and our information systems would finally be able to talk to each other."

Work Hub has enabled us to connect our entire workforce, from back-office teams right through to mobile workers. Staff can now share accurate, up-to-date information in real time. As a result, our employees can see the whole picture and deal with the issues raised by customers or inspectors – rather than just carrying out the task requirements. This allows us to map the issues to the different tasks and note the actions needed to resolve these problems.

Reduced downtime, increased savings

Using Work Hub, we can keep tenants better informed and allow them to provide feedback on our visits using our improved text messaging service. Our staff can now access and relay information securely in real time, showing them when requests have been actioned. This means that more accurate information can be shared and more jobs can be completed day-to-day. As a result of these changes, customers can be kept up-to-date with the state of repairs, and we have improved service levels from 85 to 91 per cent.

Significantly, the more flexible text messaging service has helped to reduce 'no-access' rates for inspection teams to below their target of 10 per cent. This has minimised admin downtime and resulted in savings of £32,000 per year.

In summary, Work Hub is a scalable solution that meets the growing demand for our services, delivering a whole raft of benefits, including:

- > An increase in the number of jobs completed each day
- > Significant cost savings
- > Improved communication among our staff
- > Better communication for customers and increased service levels
- > A reduction in travel
- > Reduced paperwork and data inputting / duplication

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As a result of this success, we have also looked at other areas that could benefit from Work Hub, including meals on wheels, pest control and refuse collection. Ryan Davies adds, "The relationship we've got with Advanced is a really good one. We are planning on developing our systems even further and widening the Work Hub to other services in Sandwell Council, so the relationship will just grow and grow."

Update: 'A greater degree of transparency'

Since going live with DRS, Job Manager and Work Hub in 2018, we embarked on the next phase of the rollout in 2019 by also modernising our Gas Service through these systems.

Historically our Gas Service managed schedules on paper, assigning engineers with a list of work, which made compliance to gas certification more challenging. With the Gas Service managed by DRS and Job Manager, our staff now have greater transparency with what work has been assigned to individual operatives, along with real-time progress on how each external contractor is performing.

The Cyclical Servicing module of DRS automatically identifies properties due for a gas service, based on the last gas servicing anniversary date. DRS assigns around 500 jobs per week, scheduling them and sending out appointment texts and reminders; this not only minimises no-access incidents but keeps customers better informed and helps avoid unnecessary calls relating to the scheduled appointment.

Neil Martin concludes, "The cultural change that Advanced's software is delivering is really important to us. We've achieved a greater degree of transparency than we ever have before. We are able to carry out more work in-house and have consolidated a lot of disparate datasets into a unified and dynamic format. Managing contractors effectively depends on having good visibility into the progression of jobs and the performance of individual operatives; Advanced's software is enabling that."