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CASE STUDY

PLACES FOR PEOPLE

How Places for People chose pimss to manage a significant portfolio of properties

Places for People is one of the largest property management companies in the UK. Founded in the 1960s, Places for People brings together a wide range of housing provision in terms of both property type and tenure. Its portfolio of 60,000 properties includes former housing association and local authority properties as well as new build provided as part of mixed ownership developments.

With Regional offices across the UK and a diverse and widespread portfolio of property it is important for Places for People to have information on stock condition at its fingertips. The need for this information to be up to date and accurate is driven by the requirements to meet Decent Homes Standards and, of course, the evidence base required to obtain funding and meet audit standards.



In 2007, Savills were engaged to undertake a stock condition survey of managed properties, to build on data captured in an earlier survey of 10% of the stock completed in 2001. At this point, Places for People decided to invest in a new asset management system to support the management and analysis of the increasing volume of data being captured.

Campbell Court in South Tyneside **An extra care scheme for the elderly**

The priority - a system everyone can use

Three or four asset management systems were evaluated and were all felt to have similar features. However David Wint, Head of Asset Management said that they were most impressed with pimss. "It was easy to use, and one of my main objectives was to be able to have managers across the business able to access the data themselves." High on David's agenda was the need to avoid the need for specialist IT knowledge or support in order to access and manipulate data. He was very keen to enable managers to see and update data and to create reports at local level in order to reduce the cost of support and speed up decision making. The easier the system, he reasoned, the more enthusiastic people would be about using it to its full potential and keeping the data up to date.

Another positive point was that Savills used it to store their data, and this ensured the transition from one system to another was made easier.



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Outstanding support from the pimss team

For David, the biggest benefit in selecting pimss has been the one that can't easily be judged in advance. "The pimss team's ability to respond to queries and difficulties has been second to none. The behind the scenes support has been tremendous. When we want to use the help desk, there is someone we know available on the phone; they are always very responsive and have the knowledge to help us quickly with what we need. This is the aspect of the arrangement I have particularly enjoyed."

Since installing pimss in autumn 2007, Places for People has appointed Dean Moran as Stock Investment Analyst. "It was quite exceptional" says David "we asked for him to be trained on how to use the system, and he picked it up in one day".

Of the properties in management, around 17,000 have been surveyed. The data is cloned to provide a pretty accurate picture of stock condition. Places for People has two full time surveyors who update and modify the data as work is completed.

Now if there is a query, for example, the status of a scheme, when work is programmed, the condition of specific elements and when they might be replaced, it is easy to view the information or run a report.



Kleine Wharf in Hackney
A mixed use development

pimss at work day to day

pimss sits on a Citrix server at present and requires minimum involvement from the company's IT people. David said that he wants everyone to have access to pimss – at present around 40 people have access to it. Many are 'view only' at present, but the plan is to provide them with the ability to update and amend information using their local knowledge and so help in our drive to reduce the need for central support to answer queries. Dean says that at present typical enquiries are checking on individual properties in response to questions from tenants or providing information on groups of properties for Regional Maintenance Managers.

Dean is responsible for managing the system on a day to day basis, setting up and training new users and managing security. He pulls together the information needed for Board reports and for strategic decision making. Whilst being keen for local teams to be able to update the information and access it to find out, for example when kitchens are due to be replaced and what the projected cost will be, he says that having the data managed by pimss means that programmes of work can be pulled together easily into a centralised strategic asset management plan rather than remaining managed at a local level. This he says is essential when the investment is in the region of £1bn over thirty years.



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Exploring the full potential of pimss – an exciting future

Having developed the overall strategy and investment plan, Places for People is breaking that down into manageable programmes and pimss will also link to a local investment planning system that Places for People is developing. The aim is to use the data held by pimss to develop a five year investment programme. Information held in the pimss database will enable properties to be matched by location or types of work and also provide Places for People with the ability to negotiate contracts of work based on greater efficiency and higher volumes.



The award-winning £65 million at Edinburgh's waterfront

Both Dean and David are full of ideas for exploiting the full potential of pimss and have regular meetings with the pimss team to explore opportunities. However, two key aspects have underpinned this successful implementation; the ease of using the system, which Dean says he can train someone to use in under three hours, and the genuinely helpful support from the pimss team. As David Wint says:

'you can have all the big glossy brochures in the world, but that's not what makes the impact. It's seeing and using the software and then getting tremendous behind the scenes support – that's what really counts.'

For more information about pimss, call Martin McDonnell, 0800 121 8767

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Campbell Court in South Tyneside is an Extra Care scheme for older people. The development features 42 two-bedroom apartments with an IT suite, steam room, exercise room and a restaurant together with a 24-hour on-site support team. Campbell Court has Assistive Technology to help people with disabilities live independently in their home.

Kleine Wharf in Hackney is a mixed-use development. It features three new six-storey buildings, each with basement level parking, situated around a landscaped, courtyard area. It is home to 32 apartments for affordable rent, 39 apartments for sale, a café and 25,000 square feet of commercial workspace.

Upper Strand, the award-winning £65 million development at Edinburgh's waterfront will create more than 500 new homes for sale, affordable rent and market rent as well as commercial space for facilities such as a restaurant, bar and offices. The development is part of a wider redevelopment project that will see the transformation of the 346-acre site into a mixed-use community.