

CASE STUDY

PIONEERING BEYOND HOUSING'S FUTURE.



Beyond
Housing

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beyondhousing.co.uk



Region: North East England




Products/Services: Contact Centre, UCaaS, Digital Assistant, PfH



Primary Reason for Choice:

- Revolutionise customer experience capabilities,
- Address inadequacies of the legacy phone system,
- Leverage Artificial Intelligence.



Beyond Housing, a leading housing provider in the North East of England, embarked on a transformative project to overhaul its customer service operations by implementing the 8x8 Contact Centre and Logicdialog digital assistant.

This initiative was driven by the need to address the inadequacies of the legacy telephony system and to meet the growing demand for modern, digital communication methods.

In partnership with Social Telecoms, the no. 1 ranked supplier on the PfH telecommunications framework agreement, Beyond Housing leveraged 8x8's omnichannel Contact Centre and Logicdialog's advanced digital assistant features. The integration of these solutions has revolutionised Beyond Housing's customer service capabilities, providing a scalable and efficient system that enhances the customer experience and operational productivity.

The implementation has resulted in a significant reduction in call and email volumes, increased agent productivity, and improved first contact resolution service. Early analytics from the 8x8 platform have informed strategic decisions, such as the need to rebuild the IVR system and enhance chatbot services, with further insights expected from the ongoing development of speech analytics.

INTRODUCTION.

Beyond Housing, established in 2018, is one of the largest housing organisations in the North East. With a mission to provide services that customers value, homes they desire, and places they are proud of, Beyond Housing manages over 15,000 homes and serves more than 30,000 customers in the Tees Valley and North Yorkshire areas. The organisation values its commitment to customer satisfaction and community well-being, and has nearly 800 devoted colleagues.

However, Beyond Housing faced major challenges in its customer service operations. The old telephony system was not able to cope with the number of customer inquiries and the increasing desire for modern, digital communication methods. This resulted in long wait times, a pressure on resources, and a customer service experience that did not match the high standards of Beyond Housing.

Knowing the need for a flexible, future-ready solution, and with a clear strategy to streamline its systems and suppliers, started a journey to transform its customer service operations. The aim was to put in place systems that could not only enhance current operations but also adjust to future changes in technology and customer service demands.

In pursuit of this goal, Beyond Housing engaged with Procurement for Housing (PfH) to initiate a mini-competition among suppliers on its telecommunications framework agreement. This strategic move aimed to find a partner



capable of delivering a comprehensive solution that would elevate their customer service to new heights.

“We made a conscious decision to consolidate all of our systems to make sure that we had a long-term strategic plan around how those systems would work for the benefit of our customers” says Rosemary Du Rose, Chief Executive of Beyond Housing.

CHALLENGE.

Beyond Housing was at a crossroads with their customer service operations. The existing legacy telephony system was increasingly unable to cope with the high volume of customer inquiries, leading to longer wait times and a decline in service quality. The system's limitations were becoming more apparent, with a lack of advanced technological features that

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modern digital communication platforms offer, such as real-time data analytics, omnichannel support, and AI-driven customer service tools.

The organisation's commitment to providing exceptional service to its customers and communities was at stake. Beyond Housing needed a solution that could not only address the immediate inefficiencies but also align with its strategic vision for a digital-first approach. The new system had to be scalable, flexible, and capable of integrating with the latest technologies to ensure that Beyond Housing could continue to deliver services that met and exceeded customer expectations.

The challenge was to find a solution that could provide a seamless transition from the old system, minimise disruption to the service during the implementation, and deliver a significant improvement in customer service metrics. Beyond Housing was looking for a partner who could understand its unique needs and offer a tailored solution that would set a new standard for customer service in the housing sector.



THE SOLUTION.

Social Telecoms, as the lead supplier and the top-ranked provider in the PfH framework, presented a solution that was both innovative and comprehensive, meeting the mandatory and added value requirements specified by Beyond Housing. The collaboration with 8x8 and Logicdialog was instrumental in delivering a state-of-the-art Contact Centre system that was tailored to the unique needs of Beyond Housing.

The solution offered a seamless integration of services, providing a unified platform that combined the strengths of 8x8's omnichannel capabilities with the advanced AI functionalities of Logicdialog's digital assistant. This integration ensured that customers could engage with Beyond Housing through their preferred communication channels, enhancing the overall customer experience.

A key feature of the new system was the Intelligent IVR (Interactive Voice Response) with voice commands, which allowed callers to navigate the system and find solutions through simple voice prompts. This technology improved the efficiency of call handling and provided a more intuitive experience for customers.

The 8x8 system is an incredible feature-rich service and whereas it's common to focus on the latest features that place it ahead of rivals, it's important to address more common functions which may go amiss. Some of these which were mandatory for Beyond Housing include:

- **Wrap-up Times:** The ability to control wrap-up times, giving agents the flexibility to manage their post-call work and ensuring that they were ready to assist the next customer promptly.
- **Queues and Call Back Function:** Queues were managed more effectively with the new system, and a call back function was introduced to reduce wait times and improve customer satisfaction. This feature allowed customers to request a call back instead of waiting on hold, ensuring that their time was respected.
- **MS Teams and Active Directory Integration:** The solution was designed to integrate seamlessly with Microsoft Teams and Active Directory, providing a cohesive environment that leveraged Beyond Housing's existing ICT infrastructure.
- **User-Friendly Seamless Contact Experience:** The focus was to create a smooth and easy contact experience where customers could switch between different communication channels without losing the context of their inquiries and avoiding repeating information. This was especially valuable for Beyond Housing, as it enabled its to offer a more customised and efficient service, predict customer needs, and solve problems faster.

- **The Integration with MRI Housing:** The 8x8 system's integration with MRI Housing was a critical component in creating a seamless and efficient customer service experience. This integration allowed for real-time data synchronisation between the 8x8 Contact Centre and MRI Housing's property management software. As a result, customer service agents had immediate access to a tenant's history and current situation, eliminating the need for manual searches and allowing them to focus on addressing the tenant's needs more effectively.

AI FUNCTIONALITY.

The inclusion of AI across the package, including a Digital Assistant from Logicdialog, and intelligent IVR, Quality Management, and Speech Analytics from 8x8, was a key innovation and a mandatory requirement for the Beyond Housing project. Social Telecoms' bid successfully incorporated this sophisticated approach to customer service, enhancing the overall customer experience.

The AI-driven Digital Assistant provided by Logicdialog offered an intuitive and responsive interface for customers, allowing for natural language interactions and quick access to information. This not only improved the efficiency of customer service but also increased customer satisfaction by providing immediate, relevant responses.

The intelligent IVR system from 8x8 utilised AI to understand and process voice commands, directing customers to the appropriate services and information swiftly. This reduced the need for live agent intervention for routine inquiries, freeing up valuable resources for more complex customer needs.

Quality Management and Speech Analytics further leveraged AI to analyse speech patterns and sentiments during customer interactions. This provided Beyond Housing with actionable insights, enabling them to identify areas for improvement and implement changes that would lead to better service outcomes.

Overall, the AI functionality across these systems played a crucial role in driving continuous improvement and ensuring that Beyond Housing could deliver exceptional service to their customers. It showcased Social Telecoms' commitment to providing innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of their clients.

THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS:

The procurement process for Beyond Housing's new system was facilitated by Procurement for Housing (PfH) through a mini-competition on the telecommunications framework agreement. This approach allowed for a faster and more efficient selection process compared to a full tender, bypassing the need to advertise the requirement in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). It also permitted further refinement of exact requirements while retaining the benefits

offered under the original framework agreement.

Social Telecoms, as a key partner of Logicdialog and a top-ranked supplier on the PfH framework, submitted a comprehensive proposal that addressed Beyond Housing's need for a modern and scalable contact centre solution. The proposal included 8x8 omnichannel Contact Centre licenses and promised to revolutionise Beyond Housing's customer service capabilities.

The proposal from Social Telecoms stood out for its alignment with Beyond Housing's strategic objectives, including the integration with MRI Housing and the inclusion of AI functionality across various service aspects. This alignment was crucial in meeting Beyond Housing's requirements for a solution that could improve current operations and adapt to future advancements in technology and customer service expectations.

"Procurement for Housing telecommunications framework gives housing providers a special chance. Our relationships allows 8x8 and Logicdialog's advanced solutions leading services to come together for a mutually beneficial situation that improves efficiency and tenant satisfaction."

– Rob Mottram, Social Telecoms.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation plan for Beyond Housing's 8x8 Contact Centre and Logicdialog digital assistant was meticulously designed to ensure a seamless transition and integration with Beyond Housing's existing infrastructure.

The initial phase involved a comprehensive analysis of Beyond Housing's current telephony and customer service processes to identify key areas for improvement. This was followed by the configuration of the 8x8 Contact Centre to align with Beyond Housing's specific requirements, ensuring that all mandatory specifications were met as detailed in the Telephony Specification document.

A critical component of the implementation was the integration of the Logicdialog digital assistant, which was designed to provide an intuitive and responsive interface for customer interactions. The digital assistant was programmed to handle a wide range of queries, providing immediate assistance and routing complex issues to the appropriate service agents.

Throughout the implementation, key stakeholders from Social Telecoms, 8x8 and Logicdialog maintained a close collaboration with Beyond Housing's ICT team, facilitating a smooth integration with existing systems such as Microsoft Teams and MRI CRM. Regular training sessions were conducted to familiarise Beyond Housing's employees with the new system's features and capabilities, ensuring a high level of competence and confidence in using the new services.

THE RESULT:

The implementation of the 8x8 Contact Centre and Logicdialog digital assistant has led to transformative changes in Beyond Housing's customer service operations. The quality management tool has been utilised extensively to identify training needs, thereby enhancing the first contact resolution service. The ongoing development of speech analytics promises to provide even deeper insights into customer interactions.

Some immediate outcomes from the call flows have indicated the necessity to rebuild the IVR system to ensure customers reach the right service representative on their first call. Improvements have also been made to the digital assistant services, with Logicdialog's role in Beyond Housing's digital strategy being significant. The platform's ability to reduce calls and emails by nearly 60% and increase agent productivity by nearly 30% is a testament to its impact. The future will see a continued focus on harnessing machine learning and AI to automate services, fulfilling resident requests without agent involvement, and driving operational efficiencies.

The early results are promising, with improvements in call routing and service delivery already being observed. Beyond Housing is poised to see further enhancements in operational efficiency and customer engagement as the full potential of the 8x8 and Logicdialog solutions are realised.

ENHANCING PAYMENT SECURITY AND CONVENIENCE WITH ALLPAY AND 8X8 SECURE PAY.

Beyond Housing has taken a significant step in enhancing payment security and convenience for its customers by integrating AllPay with 8x8 Secure Pay. This integration represents a commitment to providing customers with a secure and efficient payment experience.

A Leader in Payment Solutions **AllPay** is a leading payment solutions provider, renowned for its widespread adoption by 75% of the largest 400 housing providers. Their expertise in the sector makes them a trusted partner for handling transactions with the utmost security and reliability. This integration was particularly important as AllPay had, until recently, an exclusive tie to another payment gateway. In 2023, AllPay began working with other payment gateways, including Secure Pay from 8x8 and Beyond Housing were swift to add the service to their contract.

The Importance of PCI Compliance PCI compliance is critical for any organisation that processes, stores, or transmits credit card information. It involves a set of security standards that ensure all transactions are conducted in a secure environment, protecting cardholder data and reducing the risk of fraud.

8x8 Secure Pay, in collaboration with PCI Pal, offers a secure method for processing bank card information. It allows customer service agents to remain in contact with customers during transactions while ensuring that sensitive card details are not exposed, and crucially, maintains call recording throughout. This system integrates seamlessly with CRM, ERP, or billing systems, and supports secure payment processing through the customer's payment gateway.

What This Means for Beyond Housing For Beyond Housing, the integration with AllPay and 8x8 Secure Pay means providing residents with a payment system that is not only convenient but also adheres to the highest standards of security. It reflects Beyond Housing's dedication to leveraging technology to enhance service delivery and customer satisfaction.

