CASE STUDY

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES: THE POWER OF SOCIAL VALUE.

Havebury
Housing Partnership

Social telecoms
be social, stay connected

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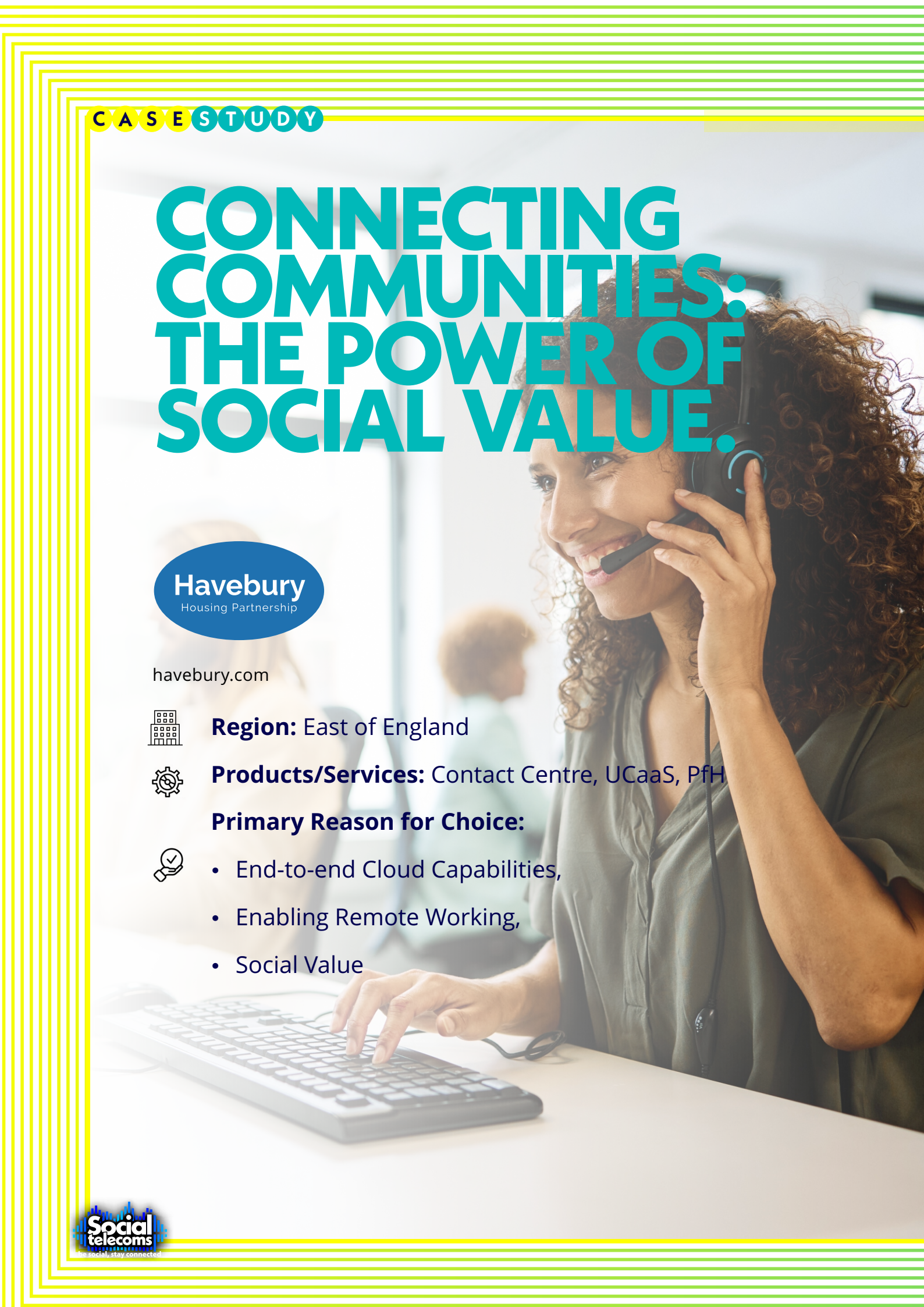

Havebury
Housing Partnership

havebury.com

Region: East of England

Products/Services: Contact Centre, UCaaS, PfH

Primary Reason for Choice:

- End-to-end Cloud Capabilities,
- Enabling Remote Working,
- Social Value

Social telecoms
be social, stay connected

In an era where connectivity is key, the Havebury Housing Partnership's (HHP) implementation of the 8x8 Contact Centre and Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) stands as a beacon of innovation and social responsibility. This case study delves into the transformative journey of HHP, a prominent provider of affordable housing in Suffolk, as they embarked on a strategic initiative to not only enhance operational efficiency and customer service but also to weave a strong fabric of social value into the community they serve.

At the heart of this narrative is the Community WiFi network at Tayfen House, a testament to HHP's commitment to digital inclusion and the betterment of resident's lives. As we explore the challenges, solutions, and triumphs of the 8x8 project, we uncover the profound impact of integrating technological projects of a housing provider with with ones to benefit their community, and how HHP is setting a new standard for social value in the housing sector.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

HHP's 2021-2025 ICT and Digital Strategy builds on the previous strategy, focusing on systems and infrastructure.
It seeks to reduce and simplify the number of applications, invest in cloud-based solutions, and deploy new services into Microsoft Azure.

The strategy outlines six clearly defined objectives:

- Responding to increasing cyber-security threats
- Ensuring quality, single source data that can be made available to all users
- Providing resilient tools for work, communication, and collaboration
- Supporting the quality ICT service offer for all users
- Preparing for smart technologies for leveraging AI to offer improved compliance, digital services, and automate tasks
- Robust processes and controls for system implementation and changes

The implementation of a new Unified Communications platform directly supports several of these objectives, demonstrating a strong alignment between the project and HHP's strategic goals. This alignment is particularly evident in the areas of providing resilient tools for work, communication, and collaboration, supporting the quality ICT service offer for all users, and ensuring robust processes and controls for system implementation and changes.

In addition to these strategic objectives, HHP also had specific requirements for the new system. They desired the ability to block numbers as per requests from users and have the ability to listen in on calls for training purposes.

They also needed tools to diagnose any issues with call quality, such as poor mobile signal, jitter, or device issues.

Underpinning HHP's values and objectives is a strong focus on customer service. Data and reporting are key to the business measuring its performance and are particularly relevant to communication systems. The implementation of the new system across the whole organisation, including the Contact Centre, supports this focus by providing robust, integrated communication tools that enhance customer service.

This strategic alignment ensures that the project not only addresses immediate operational needs but also contributes to the long-term strategic goals of HHP. The subsequent sections will delve deeper into the legacy systems, the need for change, agile working practices, procurement process, and the implementation process.

LEGACY SYSTEMS AND THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Before the implementation of the 8x8 Contact Centre and Unified Communications project, HHP was using Cisco Call Manager on-premises system that had been in place since summer 2013. While this system was rich in features, it was also based around software updates and was licensed based, which led to an inability to promptly respond to business changes and introduced unbudgeted costs. The system was modular and administered through various consoles relating to feature set (contact centre, voicemail, call recording, call manager), making it challenging to introduce new ICT staff to supporting the system.

HHP had two voice-only contact centres and as part of this project, they planned to expand to four contact centres.

They also had a monthly subscription in place for an online IVR service and their main '0300 3300 900' number. However, the overhead in administering billing and contracts associated with the system presented challenges.

The impending need for hardware upgrades, coupled with the limitations of the on-premises system, presented an opportunity for HHP to transition to a cloud-based system and begin a procurement project.

On-premises systems often come with high upfront costs for hardware and software, require regular maintenance and updates, and can lack the flexibility to scale up or down quickly in response to changes in demand. They also pose challenges in terms of disaster recovery, as data loss can be catastrophic if the physical servers are damaged. This decision was driven by the desire to move away from these limitations and maintain a cloud system, which offered numerous benefits from an IT perspective.

It knew this would allow it to leverage the benefits of a cloud-based system, including improved scalability, flexibility, and cost-efficiency. It also aligned with HHP's strategic objective of investing in cloud-based solutions and deploying new services into Microsoft Azure.

AGILE WORKING PRACTICES

In 2019, well before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, HHP began investing heavily in agile working practices. This strategic move proved invaluable when the pandemic hit, as it allowed HHP to smoothly transition to a remote working model, demonstrating the agility and resilience of HHP's ICT operations.

The investment primarily involved rolling out mobile devices, such as laptops and Surface Pros, to most of its employees. This significant shift away from the traditional use of desktop PCs added the flexibility to work from anywhere, enhancing their ability to work remotely.

By the end of 2019, HHP had completed the rollout of laptops and Surface Pros, as welll as tablets and smartphones, further enhancing their ability to work remotely.

One of the key features of this agile working model was the ability to work using a soft phone at home over VPN.

Although this feature was not initially set up for all employees the infrastructure was already in place. It took a couple of days to set everyone up, but once it was done, everyone could work remotely. However, VPNs can sometimes be slow, unreliable, and difficult to manage, especially when used by a large number of remote workers. They also require a continuous connection to the company's network, which can be a security risk.

As HHP continued to evolve its agile working practices, there was a growing recognition of the benefits of cloud-based communications over VPN. Shifting to a cloud-based system was seen as a natural progression that would further enhance the flexibility and efficiency of HHP's operations.

Cloud-based systems offer improved scalability, allowing the organisation to easily adjust its services based on demand. They also provide more robust solutions, with better reliability and performance than VPNs. Furthermore, cloud-based systems can be accessed from anywhere without the need for a continuous connection to the company's network, reducing security risks. The cloud-based system would not only address these issues but also align with HHP's strategic objective of investing in cloud-based solutions and deploying new services into Microsoft Azure.

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

The procurement process for the new system was run by Procurement for Housing as a mini competition on the telecoms framework agreement. This approach is much faster and less labourious than a full tender process and there is no need to advertise the requirement in the Official Journal of the European Union. The process also allows for further refinement of requirements whilst retaining the benefits offered under the original framework agreement.
At the time, HHP had a Cisco on-premises system in place since Summer 2013, two voice-only contact centres, and 130 users outside of the contact centres.

There was a longer-term aspiration of exploring omnichannel options for HHP such as webchat and email but these would be subsequent phases after the initial go live.

PfH asked suppliers to propose a cloud-based telephony solution which enables HHP to transition all lines including call recording, call listening and voicemail to a single cloud-based solution. The proposal should also include the transfer and management of the HHP '0300' mainline number and contact centre solution, in addition to expanding the Contact Centre to incorporate two additional teams within the business.

Additionally, a key part of the solution was to ensure that through the design and implementation, the solution must ensure PCI compliance within both automatic and manual stop/start processes. The new solution must allow for an integration solution for HHP's housing management System via the current Google Chrome extension.

In the end, Social Telecoms was selected as the preferred supplier for HHP's telecommunications, marking the successful conclusion of the procurement process.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The implementation process for the new system at HHP was managed by 8x8's Deployment Team, which took full responsibility for ensuring the successful delivery of the project from inception through successful handover into in-life support.

A dedicated Project Manager was assigned to act as the primary point of contact for HHP, ensuring the requirements and deliverables of the project were fully understood and that the delivery team was managed and directed to make certain the project was successfully implemented.

8x8's extensive experience delivering a wide range of cloud-based projects to housing providers meant they were flexible in its design and deployment of the solution, incorporating HHP's requirements within its robust implementation process. This involved the deployment and training teams working together with HHP to ensure a smooth and trouble-free implementation.

The Deployment Team used Project Management Institute (PMI) methodology and adhered to the principles of PRINCE2 (PRojects IN Controlled Environments). Also, 8x8 used various tools to help with project management of HHP's implementation. HHP's requirements and design elements were identified in the Build Capture Document, the main technical document during the deployment activities. It also used the Statement of Work that was mutually developed and agreed upon by 8x8 and HHP.

As part of the implementation process, the Deployment Team conducted a soft launch, releasing the 8x8 solution to a targeted group within the HHP company as planned "rehearsals" for the subsequent full launch.

"Implementing the 8x8 system at HHP was a smooth and efficient process. The integration with our existing platforms improved our workflow significantly, and we've seen a positive impact on our operations. The transition to a cloud-based system has not only enhanced our communication capabilities but also aligned with our strategic objectives. I'm proud of our team's efforts and the successful outcome of this project."

Kerrianne McSherry, ICT Security & Communications Senior Analyst at HHP

BENEFITS REALISED

The transition from the Cisco on-premises system and various third-party services to the 8x8 Contact Centre and UCaaS brought about several significant benefits for HHP:

- **Unified Communications**: The 8x8 system provided a unified platform for all communication needs, eliminating the need for multiple separate systems. This led to improved efficiency and ease of use for employees.
- **Scalability and Flexibility**: The cloud-based nature of the 8x8 system offered greater scalability and flexibility compared to the previous on-premises system. This allowed HHP to easily adjust its system according to their needs.

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- **Cost Efficiency**: By consolidating its communication systems into one cloud-based solution, HHP was able to reduce the overhead associated with administering billing and contracts for multiple systems.

- **Improved Customer Service**: The 8x8 system provided robust, integrated communication tools that enhanced customer service. Features such as skill-based routing, custom ready/not ready codes, and pre-recorded 'close' messages improved the efficiency of the contact centres.

- **Enhanced Reporting Capabilities**: The 8x8 system offered comprehensive reporting capabilities, allowing HHP to measure performance across a wide range of metrics. This provided valuable insights that could be used to further improve operations and customer service.

- **Remote Working Capabilities**: The 8x8 system supported HHP's agile working practices by enabling employees to work remotely. This proved particularly beneficial since the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing HHP to maintain operations with an effective working from anywhere policy.

- **Strategic Alignment**: The implementation of the 8x8 system aligned with HHP's strategic objective of investing in cloud-based solutions and deploying new services into Microsoft Azure. This ensured that the project not only addressed immediate operational needs but also contributed to the long-term strategic goals of HHP.

ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

One of the significant improvements that came with the transition to the 8x8 system was the robust suite of analytics and reporting tools. Unlike the previous Cisco system, which had no inbuilt reporting and would incur additional costs for add-ons, 8x8 offered built-in, enterprise-level analytics that could be used to make highly informed business decisions.

8x8 Analytics provided easy-to-use, customisable, and rapid insights into both historical and real-time information associated with all extensions and devices in the organisation. It allowed access to user-friendly dashboards with company-wide, department, or extension user-level call metrics. It also enabled the generation of scheduled and ad-hoc reports on both desktop and mobile devices, application of custom filters to extract desired data, and export of report data to CSV or Excel for further evaluation and archiving.

For non-contact centre employees, 8x8 Analytics offered features such as the ability for workgroup managers to monitor call traffic and adjust resources, settings, and staffing levels, and for managers to monitor agents' performance. It also provided the ability to retrieve call quality trends and call quality detail information and get individual end-point device status around the globe in real-time and take corrective measures in the event of service interruption.

For contact centre analytics, 8x8 provided industry-leading insight into the performance of the contact centre in a real-

-time display status by volume, queue/skillset, duration, channels, and service levels. Supervisors could observe agent and queue performance in real time, access data for different intervals or for the day, and share this data on wallboards. This allowed for highly customisable real-time displays within the contact centre.

The solution provided call centre managers with the information they needed to make smart business decisions. They could access reports online, customise reports to show only the data they needed, view reports by agent, agent groups, queues, date range, and channel type, and spot trends fast for quicker response.

SOCIAL VALUE REALISED

The implementation of the 8x8 Contact Centre and UCaaS by HHP was not just a technological upgrade, but also a project with significant social value.

> *"As a Community Interest Company and registered social enterprise, Social Telecoms were in a strong position to meet HHP's requirements for social value. Like HHP, Social Telecoms is a business with primarily social objectives, and its surplus is principally reinvested for that purpose in the community."*
>
> Rob Mottram, Social Telecoms

Social Telecoms' mission is to reduce the digital divide in social housing communities. Their digital inclusion products, which are often popular as separate projects, were offered to HHP as social value with the contact centre contract. One such product is **Community WiFi**, a service that has become a popular method for social housing providers to enable their communities with affordable connectivity.

In line with this, HHP chose to have Social Telecoms' Community WiFi service installed at Tayfen House in Bury St Edmunds. This decision not only provided a valuable service to the residents of Tayfen House but also demonstrated HHP's commitment to improving the quality of life for their customers and contributing to the wider community.

CASE STUDY

Tayfen House, based in Bury St Edmunds, is a remarkable institution that has been providing emergency and long-term accommodation for single homeless people aged between 18 and 65 since September 1998. The facility offers two dormitory rooms for emergency shelter, housing up to six people for up to 21 days at a time. For longer-term residents, there are 19 ensuite bedrooms where individuals can stay for 18 months until they regain stability in their lives. In addition, Tayfen House manages 32 units of supported accommodation in the community, with funding provided by Suffolk County Council.

The friendly engineers from Social Telecoms are on hand to install and support the customers. They install a network of high-speed WiFi access points around the site, providing the strongest possible signal for users to connect all manner of devices, from phones to TVs, computers to smart home tech. The engineers worked across the whole site, concealing network cables into trunking, above suspended ceilings, and using riser cupboards.
Many ceiling-mounted access points were installed inside properties to maximise signal strength, and a friendly rapport was created between the engineers and the residents and staff.

The impact of the Community WiFi service at Tayfen House has been transformative. The residents now have access to a reliable and high-speed internet connection, which has opened up a world of opportunities for them. They can now search for jobs, access online learning resources, stay

connected with their loved ones, and much more. This has significantly improved their quality of life and has empowered them to take steps towards a brighter future.

Moreover, the Community WiFi service has also enhanced the operations at Tayfen House. The staff can now conduct support meetings that require internet access in all support rooms. They can also hold team meetings and meetings with other agencies in private rooms, which was a challenge before. This has streamlined their workflow and made their operations more efficient.

"Our experience with the Community WiFi service has been overwhelmingly positive. The residents have given lots of thumbs-ups and have praised the installation team for their accommodating nature and understanding of our complexities. The transition of passcodes during occupancy changes continues to go very smoothly, and we were impressed by the speed and response of the team. The installation team was helpful and provided numbers for follow-up if there were any ongoing issues. Their service has truly been commendable."

Rebecca Lee, The Havebury Housing Partnership