



Callsys Gas Case Study - Excellent service all round for Kier

Who Are Kier Building Maintenance?

Kier Building Maintenance (KBM) operates within the Support Services division of Kier Group, a £2.1 billion leading UK building and civil engineering contractor which also specialises in private house building, property development and the Private Finance Initiative.

Providing building maintenance services for a range of clients, including local authorities and housing associations, KBM last year carried out over half a million responsive repairs in more than 200,000 homes across the UK. For Sheffield City Council alone, KBM looks after more than 50,000 local authority homes, completing 165,000 responsive and out of hours jobs every year.

As well as responsive repairs, KBM also oversees the annual service and maintenance of gas appliances within these properties. Its dedicated Gas Servicing section in Sheffield currently plans and manages over 300 services per day.

Effective but labour intensive.

Before KBM began the contract for Sheffield City Council in 2003, they had already identified a technical incompatibility between systems which meant that the administration and planning of the gas servicing program could not be done using their existing system. Very quickly, John Blackwell, Gas Section Manager, and his team at Sheffield's Gas section, had to devise a way of planning, sending and keeping a record of appointments to ensure that their legal obligations were met and their customers remained safe.

Initially, John and his team used KBM's existing application to manage appointments, but it proved extremely time-consuming and cumbersome. Although it could be used to print job tickets and record job outcomes, all updates had to be input manually and a large part of the process involved a huge paper-sorting exercise.

"Staff compiled individual letters in Microsoft Word and kept records of where all jobs were on paper," said John Blackwell. "Job tickets were printed, and then handed out to Service engineers via a system of trays. We had a tray for each Service engineer – approximately 40 – and engineers would collect their job tickets and write on them with the outcome of the visit, before returning the form to the office for further processing. Office staff would then update the systems with the details provided by the engineer, "no access" jobs were sorted back into the relevant trays again for a further, follow-up visit in eight days' time."

This process became even more complicated when customers needed to re-arrange their allocated appointment, as often occurred. "Having received a phone call from a tenant, the operative would have to find the job in the relevant engineer's tray, remove it, update the computer system with the new details, then put the job ticket back into the tray, but for a new appointment date," John continued. "Clearly, we needed some other method."





Developing the right system

After researching the market, KBM selected Cohesis (then Christim Computing) as its preferred supplier. "Chris was already working with Kier as a consultant, helping KBM to set up systems for its new contracts," said John. "Callsys [Core] was already up and running, proving very successful, and we were confident that Chris and his team could help us to develop exactly what we needed. He had – still has – a great understanding of our business and our clients."

Coinciding with the introduction of mobile working, the Callsys Gas module was carefully developed via a series of discussions with John and his team, and development is still ongoing, as new requirements are added. "Chris and Will worked closely with us throughout the design process," said John, "and the result is a system which enables each planner to manage the jobs of multiple clients to over 30 engineers every day."

Realising the full benefits

"Callsys Gas' bulk planning functionality is great," said Chris Hone, Kier Support Services IT Project Manager. Automatically raising and printing appointment letters for 300 planned service jobs each day at Sheffield's Gas section, it has become much simpler for operatives to manage both day-to-day and annual diaries. Jobs can be re-organised and re-allocated quickly, without the need for paper records, and because of the speed provided by the instantaneous system, and the fact that fitters no longer have to come to the depot to collect paperwork, the output of each fitter has also improved.

"Because of the increased productivity and reduced paper and fuel costs brought about by the introduction of Callsys Gas, we have been able to make massive savings," said John. "In addition, the fitters are happier with the greater autonomy the system offers and the planners are able to focus on managing the work of the fitters, rather than manually sifting through paper."

Another feature of Callsys Gas, which has undoubtedly saved operatives' time by reducing the need for unnecessary and unfruitful visits, is its tailored 'no access' functionality. "Because Callsys Gas can be configured easily to suit different client requirements, it caters for a variety of specifications across different Kier Gas Servicing contracts," highlighted Chris Hone. "Also useful is the provision of documentation to support a client's legal proceedings on the rare occasion that fitters are repeatedly unable to gain access to a property."

As well as delivering significant time, cost, fuel and paper savings to KBM Sheffield's gas section, Callsys Gas has also improved the service that KBM is able to offer its customers. "Everything is visible and instant at the click of a mouse," said John. "Whereas before there were retrieval problems and what a fitter had done the day before was 'lost' until you went to the paper archive, we now have all the information we need at our fingertips and we are able to relay it to clients immediately".

"There has been a huge improvement in accuracy too. We can boast 100% record-keeping. CP12 forms are held electronically and are easily visible on screen. The data captured for these is now legible, clear and comprehensive, and because each PDA 'belongs' and is traceable to an individual registered fitter, we can be totally confident that each CP12 held is a valid document, fully verified by Corgi." So confident are KBM in the quality of the data held, that their clients are now able to view the CP12s for their properties via the web.

Excellent service all round

Following the successful introduction of Callsys Gas in Sheffield, the module has been rolled out to other Gas sections at sites across KBM, including Stoke, Islington and Harlow and it now handles in the region of 700 jobs each day.

There is no doubt that Callsys Core and Callsys Gas have enabled KBM to offer its customers a more accurate, efficient, cost-effective and client-centred service. And as for the service offered by the providers of Callsys, Cohesis: "We couldn't hope for anything better," remarked John Blackwell.