



AMR SMART METER

GETTING TOGETHER HOUSING'S ENERGY DATA ALL UNDER ONE ROOF

This major housing association needed a unified smart solution to simplify their complex energy portfolio. Learn how installing AMR smart meters is transforming their approach to energy management.

Together Housing is one of Northern England's largest housing associations. Formed by the merger of five separate landlords, the association has a complex portfolio of properties with equally complex energy needs. Their reliance on estimated billing was affecting the accuracy of their forecasting. And they needed a single source of data to simplify their energy management.

"The installation programme has been quicker than we'd anticipated. We're very happy with it so far."

Patrick Berry || Managing Director



KEY FACTS

FACTS ABOUT TOGETHER HOUSING



Company HQ

Halifax, West Yorkshire



Total homes

Over 36,000

The challenge

The company was finding it difficult to get readings from the electricity meters for the communal areas of their managed properties.

The solution

A managed rollout of AMR smart meters, to provide regular meter readings and accurate billing.



The challenge

Together Housing has around 1,200 electricity meters for the communal areas of their housing stock. Nearly all of them are located in locked meter cupboards within locked premises. So if a meter needs to be read, a key holder must be found. And then they have to find the key.

These access issues meant most of their bills had been estimated for years. And in the absence of a single, unified system, the association found it hard to understand its energy use.

The solution

When Together Housing had previously looked at smart meters, the costs were prohibitive. So when the government's smart meter initiative removed the cost implications, they were keen to find a smart solution.

Together Housing chose to install Automated Meter Reading (AMR) smart meters. AMRs spell the end of estimated billing by providing accurate meter readings remotely. They also give Together Housing near real-time access to their energy consumption data.

And the key to understanding all this information is Clarity – our free online energy management platform. Clarity acts as a unified source of data for the association's energy team. It presents the data from the AMRs in a suite of useful reports, making it easy to create accurate forecasts.

The rollout

We assigned a project manager to coordinate the work between the four key stakeholders: the association; their energy broker Cost Advice Services Limited; our installation partner Energy Assets; and ourselves. Key to its success has been communication between all parties. Each month, we host conference calls so all parties can share key learnings and report on their progress.

Patrick Berry is the Managing Director of Together Housing. He says "the installation programme has been quicker than we'd anticipated. We're very happy with it so far."

At the start of the project, there were concerns around gaining access to the meters. To get around this, Together Housing assigned a dedicated staff member to accompany the engineers to make sure they could always get on-site. By visiting properties on a postcode-by-postcode basis, starting in those with the greatest concentration of sites, they've upgraded nearly 1,000 meters in 10 months.

Installations in some of Together Housing's premises must be handled with special care. After all, installs within care homes and sheltered housing must be carefully managed to ensure minimal disruption to vulnerable residents. Even with such considerations, Patrick says he's confident the project will be completed quickly, sensitively, and within the scoped timeframe.

The results

Patrick's colleagues in the energy team are finally getting access to near real-time data. SSE also organised a one-day training workshop to help them get the most out of Clarity.

One of the big benefits of Clarity is being able to drill down into the usage of specific sites to compare the energy use of like-for-like properties. They simply couldn't do this before. So if two similar blocks of sheltered housing have wildly different usage data, they can investigate.

Whether there's a problem with the fabric of the building (poor insulation, for example) or there's a behavioural issue (setting thermostats too high) it can be rectified quickly. This way, site managers can understand their data use and become accountable for it. The management team can also use this data for training.

The association is working to lower its carbon emissions, and Clarity makes it easy to keep track of their progress. In addition to the government's net-zero carbon targets for 2050, Patrick says public sector organisations will soon be subject to further emission standards which will also require in-depth reporting.

Smart meters and the future

Patrick believes his AMRs will continue to transform the way Together Housing operates. Part of their reason for choosing us was our commitment to building a strategic relationship around the UK's smart grid. By using the smart grid and the Internet of Things (IoT), the potential benefits of digitising asset management are huge.

So in the future, when the association needs to update a key item of equipment or infrastructure, they'll have the option to choose a smart solution. For example, if a certain site's inefficiency is caused by human factors, they could choose to install an externally managed heating system.



Their new AMRs will also be an integral part of their Together Energy Solar Battery Project. A trial is under way to install solar and battery systems on 250 of the association's properties. Battery systems store any unused solar power to be used whenever it's needed. Patrick says, "we estimate that in a year a typical house would save around £300 and prevent the emission of 845 kilos of carbon dioxide."

Together Housing are using Clarity to understand how much energy from each site is fed back to the grid. Armed with that information, they can develop an investment model to help them decide which technology to invest in. Are certain sites feasible for solar microgeneration? Or would they be better suited to alternative technologies such as ground- or air-sourced heat pumps?

With their AMR smart meter rollout nearly complete, Together Housing are ready for a new smart future. The big question is: are you? Visit ssebusinessenergy.co.uk/smart-metering to learn more, or call us to discuss your options.

FOR A BETTER WORLD OF ENERGY

Get in touch to talk through smart metering options for your business

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