

# Including technology in long term strategy

## The challenge

RBH (Rochdale Boroughwide Housing) is England's first co-owned mutual housing society, established in 2012 and now managing 13,000 homes and employing over 560 people. RBH Response supports more than 1,600 people with community alarms, telecare and a response service, helping them to remain independent and safe at home.

Approximately 42% of RBH's tenants are aged over 55, and this is likely to increase. How is RBH using technology as part of its support for older people who find that they need more care and support to stay at home?



## What we did

RBH's corporate strategy for 2018 to 2021 'Together', sets out how it will deliver its services and ambitions over the next 10 years. This includes providing age-friendly environments and ensuring RBH is a successful organisation that is resilient to future challenges.

As BT has announced its plans to complete the move from an analogue to an IP communications network by 2025, RBH has begun to lay the foundations for a more digital future. Community alarm and telecare calls to RBH are managed on its behalf by Tunstall Response, which has recently upgraded to PNC8 monitoring centre software. PNC8 is capable of supporting end-to-end IP operation, and RBH Response is beginning to invest in digital solutions such as the Lifeline Smart Hub to future-proof its assets and improve the service it offers to residents.

“ Both residents and professionals are increasingly recognising the role of technology in enabling people to remain independent. Technology means we can work smarter, reducing labour intensive services and deploying care where it's needed most.

**Peter Smith, Independent Living and Homelessness Manager, RBH**





## Services

RBH Prescription Responder Service works with Local Authority and NHS Discharge planning teams, using telecare as part of a package of care provider for up to three months, to enable patients with a high risk of falling to leave hospital and return to their own homes as soon as they are clinically ready. The service is commissioned through Rochdale Housing Initiative on behalf of the NHS and identifies people at high risk of re-presenting to the NHS and supports them to settle back in at home and continue to live independently. RBH is currently piloting this service to "see what works " so a full assessment can be made to help develop future partnership services.

RBH is also working with the families of the people it supports. Technology makes it easier for people to care for family members, regardless of whether they live in the same home. RBH Response means family members can be the first point of contact in the event of an emergency if they wish to be, reducing reliance on statutory services.

RBH works through a strong partnership with Rochdale Borough Council, including with its Careline service, to ensure services to residents are joined up and duplication is minimised. This includes currently offering a range of technology, response and welfare monitoring options to people living in both rented and private owner-occupied accommodation.

RBH is also working to reduce winter pressures on health and social care, by investing in ambient temperature sensors. These will raise an alert at Tunstall Response if the temperature in a resident's home drops below a predefined limit, enabling support to be offered at an early stage.

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## Next steps

RBH continues to explore and invest in a range of new technology, seeking ways that digital solutions can be combined to create personalised support based on what the service user wants and needs. It plans to increase its use of mobile solutions, using GPS to protect people when they are away from home, especially in the semi rural areas of the borough. It is also keen to introduce more GSM and IP based solutions, which reduce reliance on traditional landlines, meaning technology can be used more flexibly.

RBH supports more  
than **1,600** people



## Margaret's story

### The situation

Margaret is 84 years of age and has lived alone in an RBH bungalow for just over two years. Margaret has always been a fiercely independent, houseproud lady, doing her own shopping, cooking and household tasks, and had no major health issues.

“ I moved to the bungalow from a large house which I cleaned on my own. I also had a large garden and had started to grow my own vegetables.”

A few months ago Margaret felt a little unwell and feverish and decided to take a shower to see if it would help. Unfortunately, Margaret passed out in the bathroom and lay on the floor unconscious for 14 hours before the emergency services were alerted and the police broke in to rescue her.

Although Margaret spent a few weeks in hospital it is unclear what caused this episode and there were obvious concerns this could happen again.

### The solution

As a proactive measure the hospital made a referral to the RBH response service for the installation of telecare equipment, which included a Lifeline home unit and a Vibby, which would automatically raise an alert if it detected Margaret had fallen and also enable her to call for help from anywhere in her home. The equipment was funded for three months by the Prescription Responder Service (described on page 2). The day Margaret was discharged home from hospital, an RBH mobile responder visited to install the telecare equipment. The appointment was arranged so that Margaret's son could also attend to see the demonstration and was able to understand the purpose and use of the equipment



### The outcome

When asked about how having the equipment made her feel, Margaret said: "It's made me feel safer, and has taken the worry away for me. It also gives my family peace of mind as they don't live close by".

As with all customers, before the 'prescription service' is due to end, Margaret was contacted by RBH to ask if she would like to continue with the service and the range of options and costs were explained in full, so that she could make an informed decision as to what was most appropriate for her needs at that time. Margaret had no doubts that she wanted to continue receiving the service.

“ I am as pleased as punch with the service I have received. It makes me and my family feel confident that if something did happen I would get help very quickly. It's like having a friend you can just tap on the shoulder for a bit of help.”