

Case study

# Housing 21

Housing 21's  
digital revolution  
with Zellis

Zellis and Housing 21 empower  
employees and managers in move  
to unify workforce.



Housing 21





**Meeting the needs of  
the individual and  
the organisation**

## Future proofing a workforce and empowering employees

Not for profit housing association Housing 21 is a leading provider of Retirement Living and Extra Care for older people. Housing 21 has around 24,000 properties across more than 600 schemes, in 215 local authority areas across England.

The organisation originated when the Royal British Legion began housing disabled ex-servicemen and widows (and later older ex-servicemen and women) in 1921. In 1964, the organisation was recognised as a housing association, which separated from the Royal British Legion in 1993, taking on the name Housing 21.

The rich history of this organisation demonstrates the traditional nature of the business, with two thirds of the 4300-workforce comprising of ancillary roles such as carers, cleaners and caterers.

“We’ve always had some Zellis technology in play, but not using it to its full capacity. But we had lots of workarounds so that those that don't want to use technology didn't have to. This created a remote and disconnected workforce. So, a high priority for us in the last 12 months has been connecting a workforce to technology for almost the first time.”

Ian Hodson, Director of People and Culture,





With employees that are 89% female and an average age of 49, 8% of the workforce are also working beyond 65. And with an older workforce, 55% of Housing 21 sickness absence is attributed to long term cases which made it important for managers and central teams to be able to offer early intervention through data monitoring and awareness.

“We need to be able to attract the next generation of employees. And younger people won’t come and work for us if we’re not offering a positive, flexible environment rather than processing via paper, and not offering the ability to connect to their wider colleagues and feel rewarded.”

Ian Hodson, Director of People and Culture,

Therefore Housing 21 faced two clear challenges, introducing technology to an older, often resistant workforce and attracting a younger, more diverse talent pool, to future proof the organisation.



**Pressure on managers and  
a lack of connectivity**

## Connecting systems, connecting people

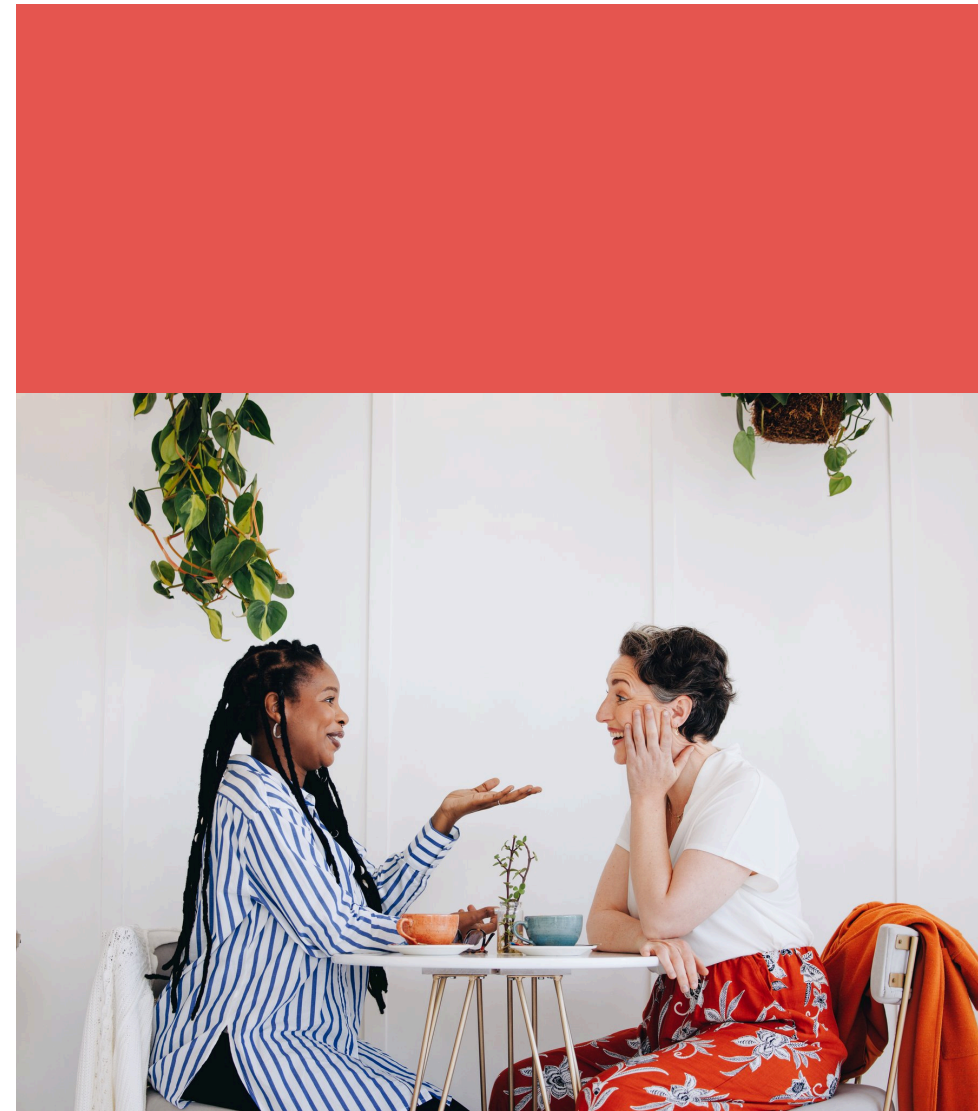
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Housing 21 properties are based around a scheme system; each court comprises residential properties with on-site facilities such as hairdressers and laundrettes as well as social activities that build a sense of community. In schemes where care is required there is also a restaurant and kitchen facilities. From a functional point of view, each individual property operates as its own separate ecosystem, with everything in the scheme empowered to the manager, from day to day running through to communication with the team and wider organisation.

This can lead to fewer opportunities for employees, the courts exist as bubbles, with few opportunities to connect with people and colleagues outside of them. However, as a platinum Investor in People employer, Housing 21 have so much more that they can offer employees in terms of wellbeing, social connection and engagement.

As Director of People and Culture, Ian wanted to create a new fit for purpose function within the business that empowers and educates colleagues and gives them the tools to do things for themselves, rather than putting everything through an overstretched manager.

As part of this, they brought the payroll function into the People and Culture department, away from Finance, to “join the team and join the dots,” says Ian. It was acknowledged that the payroll was a key part of ensuring the employee experience was one where financial wellbeing was a core focus, and the transactional payroll also offered opportunities to align more closely with employee benefits.



A man with curly hair and a beard, wearing a brown sweater, is looking at a smartphone in a shop setting. The background shows shelves with various items and a green plant.

**Making MyView attractive  
and useful to staff**

## Your system, your way

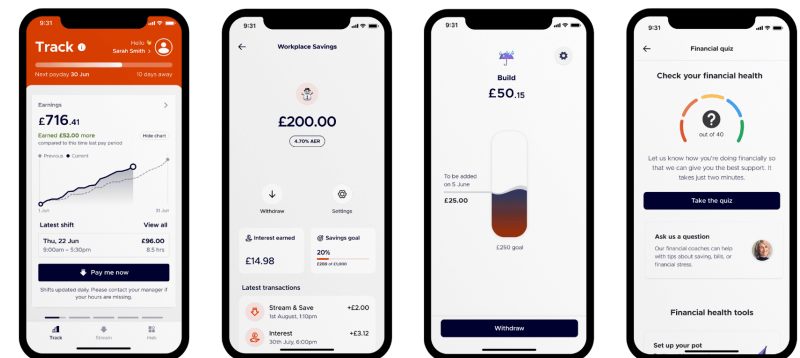
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Zellis systems are designed to be tailored to client needs, with the organisation developing their own system as their situation requires. Housing 21 had been working with Zellis for many years but had yet to develop their system to create the best experience for colleagues. That has all changed in the last 12 months.

To date, Ian and his team's main priority has been on building out MyView to be a better source of information for employee and managers. Some of the changes that Housing 21 have made include:

- Each employee has an online record which includes relevant information as well as hosting files such as DBS and Right to Work checks and other documents. Not only does this make it easier to access the information when required, but also helps keep required checks up to date for compliance and best practice.
- Useful navigation links to everything that might be helpful to the employee such as their workplace, benefits, pension, as well as an FAQ section, so that colleagues don't have to go through their manager to get answers to their questions.
- Use of Team Calendars in [MyView](#) have supported more efficient workforce planning.
- Housing 21 also offers wellbeing support and a health cash plan, to encourage employees to proactively manage their health concerns and get treatment where possible, details of which can also be accessed through MyView.

- Emergency contacts are now easily accessible through MyView, with an option for colleagues to nominate a different emergency contact for their mental health to make sure that the individual has the right support.
- Forms to allow changes to pension contributions and benefits have been built into MyView.
- Providing employees with complete ownership of their data with clarity on what type of data that is being held and how it's being used.
- New areas of MyView have been developed to support other business areas with gathering information on hospitality, professional memberships and conflicts of interest.
- In addition, Housing 21 are also able to gather diversity data to improve DEI across the organisation through their innovative "Check, Complete, Confirm" campaign to ensure employee information is accurate on MyView.





**Accessing data for  
those that need it**

## Putting autonomy and control in the hands of managers and individuals

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Housing 21 managers previously had no access to data and therefore were unable to run any reports. Digitisation means that data is captured at a high enough level to be fed back into [management reporting](#).

This gives more autonomy and flexibility to managers who now have access to and control over relevant data regarding not only their own scheme, but the rest of the organisation. This comprehensive overview streamlines operations for both managers and individuals.

This is particularly pertinent in terms of pay and expenses, ensuring that contracts are correct, expenses are logged, and the right number of hours are being accounted for. This creates a smoother experience for managers, who were previously making decisions based on paper notes and reminders or left to make judgements on the information that was accessible.

**“So rather than have discrepancies between paper, manager and system, there is one source of information,”**

**Ian Hodson, Director of People and Culture,**



*And how have these changes been received by Housing 21's staff?*

Ian and his team have recently completed an awareness project called Connecting Employees, designed to encourage individuals to long on and start using MyView.

“This is a big challenge in a housing organisation because staff are accustomed to a paternalistic system and are not looking for change. If they think there's a benefit however, they will change, but you'll have to show them the benefits. MyView gives employees more control and autonomy, while lifting the burden on the managers. Ultimately, everyone is getting the information that they need,”

Ian Hodson, Director of People and Culture,



# Housing

## Thank you for reading

If you'd like to find out more about how Zellis can empower your workforce and provide autonomy to your managers, we'd love to hear from you.

[Get in touch](#)

