

January 2023

## A guide for the Housing sector...

Saving up to £15,000 a month by leveraging digital assistants to automate repair bookings, payments, balance checks and more.

# About logicdialog

logicdialog gives Housing Associations the tools to rapidly build, integrate and launch AI powered digital assistants that easily automate core services, saving time and money whilst delivering an exceptional tenant experience.

logicdialog is used by more than a dozen Housing Associations and housing departments of Local Authorities across the UK.

**logicdialog is the most widely used service automation platform in the sector.**

## Trusted by...



## About this guide

Throughout quarters 3 and 4 of 2022, we worked with, interviewed and analysed the contact centre traffic of 50 Housing Associations and Local Authorities with housing responsibilities.

In this guide we outline our findings and illustrate areas of these businesses that have, or could in future, benefit from the implementation of integrated, intelligent digital assistants.

While all data, comments and case studies are anonymised, we would like to thank some key contributors, including Melin Homes, Network Homes, Monmouthshire County Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, Beyond Housing, 8x8, Social Telecoms and Central Bedfordshire Council.

If you have any comments or would like to discuss your Housing Association needs, feel free to contact us at <https://www.logicdialog.ai/contact>

Thanks for taking the time to look through the guide and we hope you find it useful.

Team logicdialog!





# The backdrop

The UK's social housing sector today faces a range of complex and interconnected issues. Some of these issues - like the shortage of available properties, the quality and affordability of housing, the lack of choice and flexibility for tenants, and the negative stigma associated with social housing - are long term and ongoing.

More recent issues however have been driven by wider macroeconomic factors like the Ukraine war, the cost of living crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data from both the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) shows that these factors have undoubtedly contributed to higher costs for UK Housing Associations as these organisations pay more and more for the materials, goods, and services needed to develop, operate and maintain their estates.

While COVID-19 and the Ukraine war have massively disrupted global supply chains, and made the import of construction materials and equipment more expensive, there are further knock on effects: The resulting global energy crisis, for example, has impacted the overall UK economy, leading to further cost increases for the Housing Association sector.

Despite significant headwinds, Housing Associations remain tightly regulated, meaning there is little opportunity to offset these price increases with higher rent or service charges.

**The battle to operate a viable *and* compliant Housing Association therefore has become a huge challenge.**

In this guide we'll explore how service automation tools such as **digital assistants, chatbots and conversational AI** can help Housing Associations deliver on their obligations to tenants and regulators, while maintaining profit margins against a backdrop of rising costs.

If you find this guide helpful, please explore more Housing Association resources at [logicdialog.com/housing](https://logicdialog.com/housing)



# Regulatory responsibilities

Having touched on the challenges faced by Housing Associations, it's worth highlighting the regulatory responsibilities that remain in place despite this backdrop of continuing uncertainty.

The social housing sector in the UK is subject to a range of regulatory issues related to building regulations, planning permissions, equality, diversity, finances, and the use of public funds.

It is perhaps the regulations relating to housing affordability and quality however, that create the most obvious funding gap.

The regulation of rent levels as set out in the Governments' "Affordable rent" guidelines limit the amount of rent that can be charged for properties funded through the Affordable Homes Programme.

While the guidelines are rightly in place to protect tenants, they haven't accounted for the continued upwardly spiralling costs of managing a property portfolio.

The issue is compounded by another regulatory issue facing the social housing sector - the requirement for Housing Associations to meet certain standards for the quality of their properties as set out in the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.

The perfect storm of capped rental income and unforgiving regulation vs universally rising costs is making it difficult for many Housing Associations to balance the books.

More and more Housing Associations are turning to technology to help them streamline operations and reduce costs without compromising the tenant experience or the businesses adherence to regulation.

Digital assistants are one such technology supporting these objectives. Let's look at what they are exactly, and how they can help Housing Associations and their tenants.

# Digital assistants - what are they exactly?

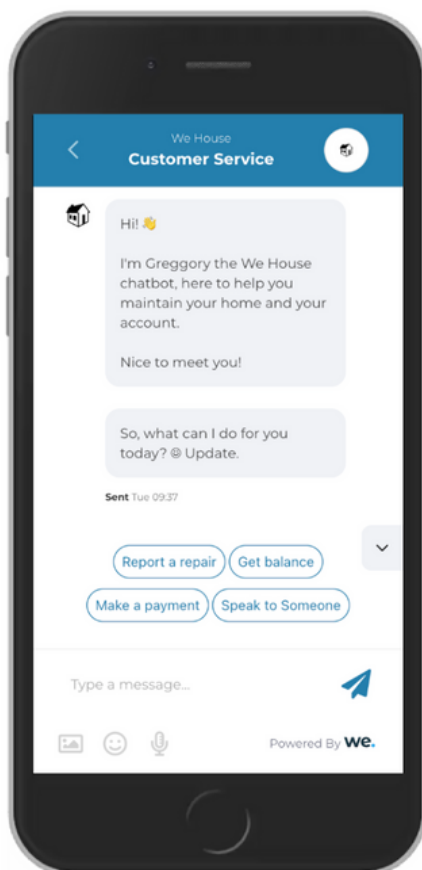
A digital assistant is a software program that can understand natural language text and voice commands to complete tasks for the user.

Digital assistants can perform a wide range of tasks such as making bookings, taking payments, setting reminders, answering questions, making recommendations, and controlling other systems through integrations.

The most effective digital assistants use artificial intelligence and machine learning to improve their capabilities over time, and they can be accessed via websites, portals,

smartphones, mobile apps, messaging apps (like Whatsapp), or smart speakers like Alexa and Google Home. As more and more people use a company's digital assistant, the business can begin to identify trends in the conversational data that will help them to continually refine and improve their services.

The automation of core tasks coupled with the insights gleaned from conversational data is proving to be a powerful combination.



*The automation of core tasks coupled with the insights gleaned from conversational data is proving to be a powerful combination for the social housing sector.*





# Digital assistants in the housing sector

The use of digital assistants across the UK social housing sector has the potential to greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of housing providers - and ultimately enhance the experience of tenants. Let's explore the various ways in which digital assistants can be utilised in the social housing sector, and the potential benefits of their adoption.

## FAQs

Digital assistants can provide customer support by instantly answering common questions from tenants. This improves the overall tenant experience, and drastically drives down contact centre costs (as we'll see later).

## Communication between tenants and housing associations

Digital assistants can be used to improve communication and foster a sense of community among tenants. For example by sending reminders about rent payments or upcoming community events.

## Internal processes

Digital assistants can be leveraged internally too. They can provide staff training, help with policy and document searches, and cut down the time teams spend on non-core tasks (a OnePoll survey found that 26% of our time is eroded by such tasks).

## Property management

In addition to improving the tenant experience and internal processes, digital assistants can also help housing associations manage their properties more efficiently by (for example) working with smart home devices to monitor the energy usage of a property, and providing recommendations for ways to reduce energy consumption.



# Digital assistants in the housing sector (cont.)

## Tenant data

By using a digital assistant to collect tenant data for storage in a CRM system, Housing Associations can more easily track important details such as rental history and income. This could facilitate speedier housing applications and help Housing Associations better understand the needs and demographics of their tenant base.

## Maintenance requests

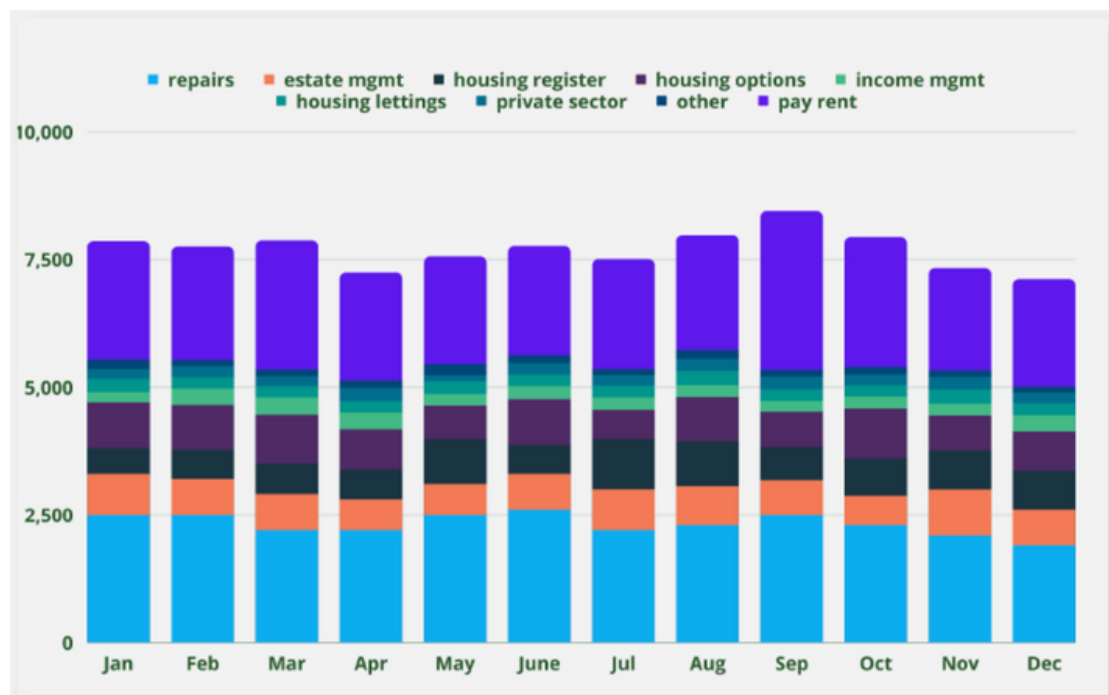
Tenants can use digital assistants to report maintenance issues, and even book repairs without human interjection. This massively streamlines the process, and ensures issues are addressed in a timely manner. **See our call analysis study below...**

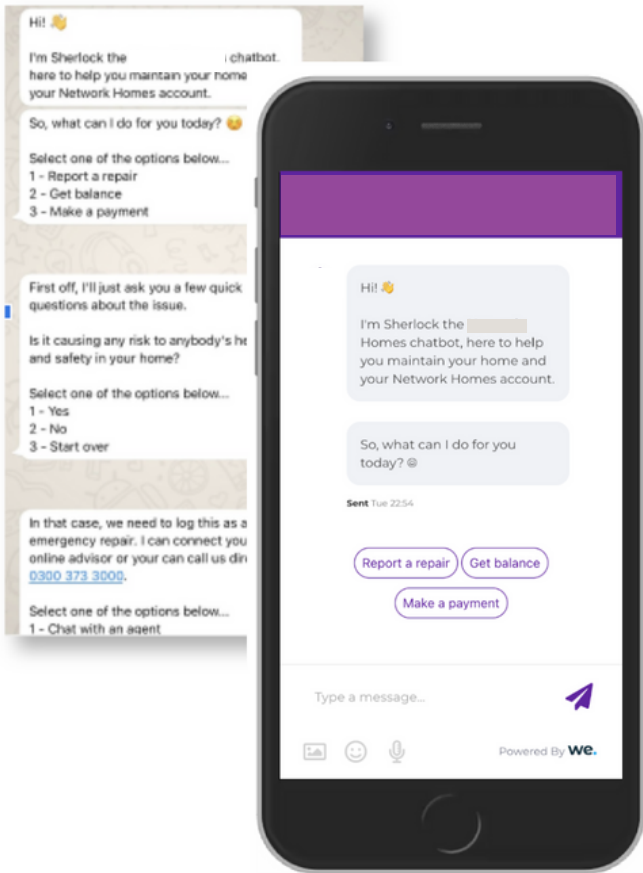
### We analysed the calls and emails of 50 UK Housing Associations...

Analysing the call and email volumes (and topics) of 50 UK Housing Associations highlighted some findings:

- Repair related contacts contributed c25% of all contact centre traffic
- Payment related contacts made up a similar proportion
- All of these contacts are highly transactional and can easily be automated
- Doing so would reduce cost to serve by around £15,000 per month\*

*\*based on industry standard call length, cost per call minute, and 70% uptake*





# Case study.. A G15 Housing Association.

**The G15 is an organisation of the largest housing associations in and around Greater London. Collectively they are responsible for managing in the region of 600,000 homes in London.**

We're currently working with a G15 member, and targeting a 50% reduction in repair booking calls with a website and Whatsapp based digital assistant.

logicdialog is currently being rolled out across the client's property portfolio so that tenants can book repairs, make payments, check balances, and access information via a digital assistant which launches Q1 2023.


The digital assistant will 'live' on the Housing Association's website, on their mobile app, and on their Whatsapp channel, meaning their tenants will soon be able to access the services and information they need 24/7/365, using whichever channel they choose.

That's a great tenant experience, and it means that the client can come to expect c50% fewer phone calls and emails coming into the contact centre.

This could drive operational efficiencies amounting to around £250,000 per year.\*

*\* based on industry standard cost to serve*

Visit [logicdialog.ai/resources](https://logicdialog.ai/resources) to use our Housing Association ROI calculator. Input metrics specific to your business and find out how much time and money a logicdialog digital assistant could save you.



Targeted year 1 results

**50%**

fewer calls and emails into contact centre

**4.1K**

Hours returned to business

**250K**

potential savings annually





# Implementing a digital assistant - 20 steps to take.

With 5 years of experience and successful automation projects for the likes of Amnesty International, AS Roma, Diageo, and The AA under our belts, we know what it takes to deliver enterprise-level service automation into global clients.

We've also completed over a dozen projects in the UK Housing Association and Local Government space. That means we've learned (sometimes the hard way) that the key to a successful digital assistant deployment is to follow as many of these steps as you can.

Steps may vary based on your organisation's specific goals and needs, but if you need any help, **just reach out to us** and we'll join you on your conversational AI journey...

For now, this is a great pathway to follow...

- Define your goals and objectives for using chatbots or digital assistants.
- Determine which tasks or processes can be automated or assisted by chatbots or digital assistants.
- Evaluate your current technology infrastructure to ensure that it can support chatbots or digital assistants.
- Research and compare different chatbot or digital assistant platforms and tools.
- Identify the specific needs and preferences of your target audience.
- Determine how you will integrate chatbots or digital assistants into your existing systems and processes.
- Consider how you will train and manage your chatbots or digital assistants.
- Develop a plan for monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of your chatbots or digital assistants.



## Implementing a digital assistant - 20 steps to take.

- ❑ Identify any potential legal or compliance issues related to the use of chatbots or digital assistants.
- ❑ Determine how you will handle sensitive or confidential information.
- ❑ Consider the potential impact on your workforce, including any potential job displacement or the need for up skilling.
- ❑ Establish clear guidelines and protocols for using chatbots or digital assistants.
- ❑ Determine how you will handle customer inquiries or complaints related to chatbots or digital assistants.
- ❑ Develop a plan for handling technical issues or malfunctions.
- ❑ Consider how you will handle data privacy and security.
- ❑ Determine how you will handle updates and maintenance for your chatbots or digital assistants.
- ❑ Develop a plan for promoting and marketing your chatbots or digital assistants to your target audience.
- ❑ Consider how you will handle any potential negative public perception or backlash related to the use of chatbots or digital assistants.
- ❑ Establish a budget for implementing and maintaining chatbots or digital assistants.
- ❑ Assemble a team or task force to oversee the implementation and management of chatbots or digital assistants.

*We recommend you print these checkpoints off and use this list as a high level checklist to support your digital assistant project.*



# Measuring success - key metrics.



There are a number of success metrics you should consider when assessing the success of your project. Most enterprise level platforms will provide data on the following key performance indicators...

- **User adoption:** This measures the number of users who are actively using the digital assistant. High user adoption rates indicate that the digital assistant is providing value to the users.
- **Task completion rate:** This measures the percentage of tasks that are successfully completed using the digital assistant. A high task completion rate indicates that the digital assistant is effective at helping users achieve their goals.
- **Time savings:** This measures the amount of time that users save by using the digital assistant to complete tasks / find resolutions.

- **Customer satisfaction:** This measures how satisfied users are with the digital assistant. High levels of customer satisfaction indicate that the digital assistant is meeting the needs of the users.
- **Cost savings:** This measures the amount of money that the business is able to save by using the digital assistant to complete tasks. This is important because it can help businesses reduce costs and improve profitability.
- **Increase in revenue/speed of collection:** This measures the increase in revenue or reduction in pay delay that the business experiences as a result of implementing the digital assistant. This is important because it can help businesses grow and expand.

There's a myriad of conversational data metrics businesses can leverage to understand and improve the performance of their digital assistant. Head to <https://www.logicdialog.ai/resources> to learn more about conversational data and how to use it to better understand your customer needs.



# Summary

In summary, Housing Associations have a responsibility to provide good quality, well-maintained, affordable housing for some of society's most vulnerable.

The industry professionals we spoke to when producing this guide clearly take that responsibility very seriously.

But with new pressures being felt across the sector, and events like COVID19 causing long lasting financial issues for many tenants, delivering on expectations presents a very real challenge for Housing Associations.

More and more Housing Associations are searching for operational efficiencies that will help them to maintain profit margins, deliver the living standards every tenant deserves *and* remain compliant without resorting to non-regulatory rent increases.

Service automation is one way Housing Associations can drive operational efficiencies, and those organisations leaning into platforms such as logicdialog are beginning to understand the benefits.

Our logicdialog service automation platform is supporting Housing Associations by saving them time and money that can ultimately be diverted into more complex areas of the business.

**Book your free consultation today** and we would be happy to advise on how best to integrate conversational AI into your Housing Association for the benefit of the business and your residents.

"54% of all enquiries are handled by the digital assistant..."

We've already given hundreds of hours back to the contact centre"

*Monmouthshire  
County Council*



# Thank you!

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