

Incline-IT designed and implemented Arches Housing's IT transformation, migrating their technology platform to the cloud to support the organisation's growth strategy, enable better and more efficient ways of working and boost business continuity. Originally projected to take up to six weeks, the migration was expedited and completed in just three weeks in the face of COVID-19.

Arches Housing

- Provides affordable decent homes for rent in Sheffield
- Manages over 1,200 properties
- Plans to develop a further 400 homes by 2028, part-funded by reinvestment of financial surpluses
- 30 staff members

Our solution

- Phased migration completed in three weeks
- Expedited from the original timeline of six weeks, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

The challenges they faced

- On-premise IT system at the end of its hardware lifecycle
- Aimed to facilitate better, more efficient ways of working
- Strategic objective to remain low cost and achieve value for money
- Needed an IT system which better supported business objectives and growth plan

The outcomes

- Significantly enhanced business continuity
- Seamless switch to remote working on announcement of the enforced lockdown
- Enabled multiple efficiencies and improved productivity

Arches Housing's digital transformation

Enhancing business continuity, accelerating growth

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Seamus Harkins, Head of Data Services,
Arches Housing

Unleashing the value of cloud

Arches Housing was formed in 1975 on the back of a promise - to provide affordable decent homes for the rent, regeneration and revival of communities in Sheffield.

Continuing to live by that promise today, Arches provides over 1,200 properties across Sheffield. With an ambitious growth programme, the organisation plans to reinvest financial surpluses to develop a further 400 homes for the people of Sheffield, Rotherham and the surrounding areas by 2028.

With a close-knit but ever-growing team of 30, Arches works on the principle of remaining low cost. In doing so, its significant annual surpluses are reinvested into existing stock as well as funding new developments. For this organisation, focusing on value for money and working smart is key to delivering quality homes and five-star services to its residents.

A platform to deliver the vision of tomorrow

Key to the achievement of Arches' growth strategy is the company's approach to value for money and its Better Ways of Working project. Both of which help to produce the efficiencies which support investment in new and existing homes.

The organisation was operating with on-premise systems which were at the end of their hardware lifecycle. This presented the opportunity to re-assess and realign the IT strategy with the organisation's wider business strategies and plans.

"Even before we formally reviewed our IT strategy, we knew that the on-premise system was tying us to the past a little. As an organisation, we are pretty forward-thinking, and there were various strategies across the business that could be better supported by a modern IT system – particularly our Better Ways of Working Strategy" said Seamus Harkins, Data Services Manager at Arches Housing.

"We are a small team with big ambitions. To see them materialise, we all need to work productively. To help make that happen, Arches is committed to being a great place to work and a key part of that is giving people freedom and flexibility by facilitating a mobilised workforce that can be productive no matter where they are."

Cloud was identified as an excellent enabler for the company's objective to facilitate remote working, and beyond that it serves as a sound foundation for software and applications which deliver further efficiencies, such as automated workflows. Additionally, as cloud removes the requirements for capital expenditure, is highly scalable and minimises the risks of having on-premise set ups, it also ticked the boxes on the value for money and risk management agenda.

Selected for its transparent approach, Incline-IT was contracted as Arches' trusted partner to migrate the on-premise servers to public cloud, and provide on-going management of the cloud services.

A faultless migration

For Arches Housing, a phased migration approach was favoured as it posed lower risk than the alternative of lift and shift.

However, in the background, the COVID-19 pandemic was fast unfolding across the globe. Whilst the transition to cloud had been planned before COVID-19 became a known risk for the UK, Arches requested for the migration to be expedited to enhance business continuity and enable a simple transition to home working in the increasingly likely event of an enforced lockdown.

In the spirit of true partnership, Incline-IT re-prioritised project plans to bring the migration forwards from its initial start date. To reduce completion timeframes whilst maintaining a phased migration approach, additional resource was allocated and a cloud migration journey, designed to be swift yet robust, with minimised downtime and risk of data loss was formulated.

"In this day and age, migrating servers is always going to be a slightly intimidating task, given that most of our operations are contingent on the IT system being available. The added time pressure, given the COVID-19 pandemic, could have made this pretty daunting. But the team at Incline-IT were determined to do everything they could to help us. They installed every confidence in me and the executive level team." said Harkins.

The results were a completed migration within a three-week period, with minimal downtime and zero data loss.

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Arches Housing



“We achieved the migration successfully in less time than we could ever have imagined possible. We were totally astounded. It’s clear from their work that Incline-IT deliver on everything they promise. They really know their stuff and pull out all the stops to help where they can – it’s like they’re an extension of our in-house team”.

Remote working made easy

Arches' migration to public cloud, originally projected to take six weeks, was completed within just three weeks - which fortunately fell one week prior to the COVID-19 enforced lockdown. As a result, the company's new IT system enabled the whole team to transition overnight to working from home.

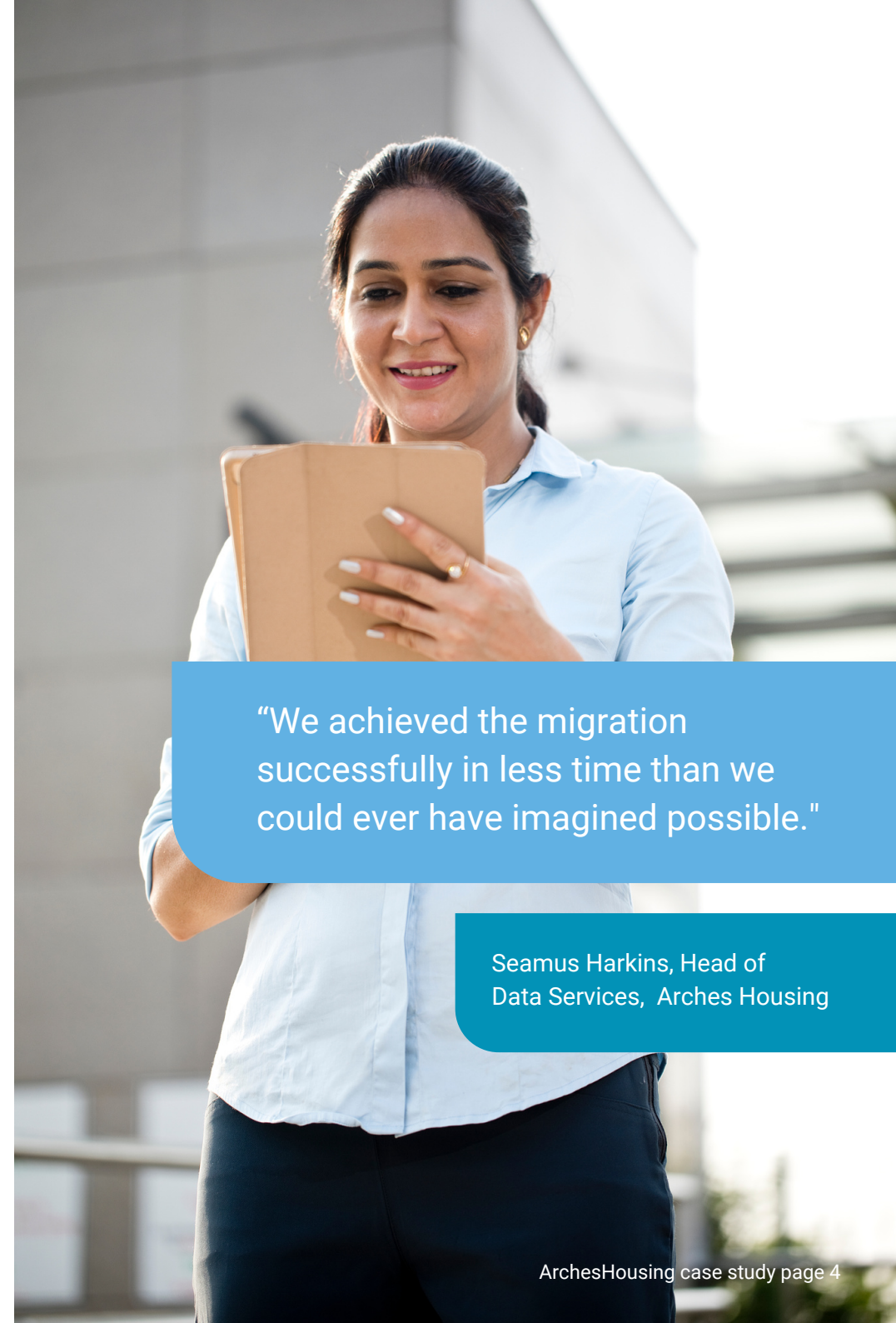
For the wider team, this facilitated a smooth change process and enabled them to stay productive during the disruption. They have been working from home ever since (at the time of writing), and multiple users have commented that even though they're working from home, the IT system's performance is significantly better than its on-premise predecessor.

Greater focus on core mission

“One of the biggest benefits we had in migrating to cloud was that it allowed our wider team to focus on our residents – which was incredibly valuable at this time when they needed the support of Arches more than ever.” said Harkins. “They didn’t have to spend time on the phone to the helpdesk getting set up to work from home – it all just worked.”

“As for the IT team, we’ve been freed up from having to think about server maintenance, upgrades and all those other time-consuming tasks. Instead, we’re working on more strategic initiatives for the organisation that will ultimately improve our residents’ experience and deliver efficiencies which support our growth programme”.

The project proved to be a valuable vehicle to enable wider strategies for growth and risk management for the company. During the uncertain and unpredictable times of the COVID pandemic, the organisation is reassured by its ability to switch from office-based to home-based working overnight (if required) without hindering productivity.



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Seamus Harkins, Head of
Data Services, Arches Housing



This digital transformation has also allowed the organisation to realise its aspirations for enabling Better Ways of Working and flexible working for its team, and has already started to see some positive impacts. And with regards to its value for money agenda, the flexibility of the system is enabling Arches to get a lot more from their IT system, without having to allocate more resource to it.

Making a difference, together

Following their experience of migrating to cloud and the consequential benefits, Arches has developed an appetite for digital transformation. Their AWS cloud servers provide a solid foundation upon which to continue innovating with technology to produce efficiencies and drive improvements for residents and staff.

Incline-IT continues to manage Arches' cloud servers and the organisations went on to work together on two further projects: migration of an SQL server, and re-platforming multiple legacy windows servers.

“Working in partnership with Incline-IT has given us the confidence, know-how and capacity to modernise IT within the business. We’re now in a great position to realign IT with the rest of the business, and ensure that IT supports our wider goals and core purpose.”, said Harkins. “Now we’ve dipped our toes and glimpsed the possibilities, we’re keen to go further and become an enabler of change for Arches”.

“As a lean organisation with a strategic intention to remain low-cost, it’s important to get it right first time with high-impact, high-dependency projects such as these. Getting the right partner in place is imperative; not just to manage the infrastructure, but to buy into your vision and really understand where you’re headed as a business, and how to set up a platform which enables the wider team to make that happen. For us, Incline-IT has been that partner”, added Harkins.

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About Incline-IT

Incline-IT provides IT services built around you. We maximise the value of your IT investments and keep your business up to speed with cutting edge technology and services designed with scalability in mind. With a focus on high skilled resources and the use of innovative technologies to deliver automation in services, we get it right first time.

Passionate about customer service, your outcomes are our main priority. More than just a supplier, we are a trusted partner, designing and delivering the best and most relevant services, tailored to your specific requirements and challenges.

Our promise is to be honest and transparent – always. And as the only supplier of managed IT services to provide true transparency of costs and service levels, we are the best choice to help you close the gap between the challenges of today and your strategic vision of tomorrow. We'll take you on the journey from legacy technologies and architecture into the cutting edge of infrastructure and network capabilities only available under a true cloud first strategy.

InclineIT

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