



MANAGING DATA  
SECURELY

## Case Study Four Housing

# PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

FOUR HOUSING DEVELOPS WATERTIGHT DATA PROTECTION  
FOLLOWING IN-DEPTH CONSULTING

### CLIENT PROFILE

Four Housing is a social housing provider based in the North East of England. It owns and manages approximately 5,000 homes across a large geographic area - from Redcar and Cleveland on its southernmost boundary, to Berwick-upon-Tweed on the border with Scotland. Four Housing provides a wide range of housing options, from general needs to supported housing, as well as shared ownership housing for sale, and care and support services.

In terms of annual turnover, Four Housing ranks 148th in the UK and consistently scores highly in tenant satisfaction surveys. Headquartered in Durham, the housing association's strategy is focused on providing value for money for tenants across all of its services.

### THE CHALLENGE

As with many housing associations, Four Housing holds a lot of sensitive information on tenants. This includes names and addresses, details about women's refuges and occupants, tenant histories that relate to vulnerabilities and disabilities, and other personal data.

Paul Carmody, ICT Manager, Four Housing said:

“ All the staff within Four Housing are aware of the need for data protection. We deal with vulnerable people and personal information on a daily basis and need to safeguard the information we hold. ”



### AT A GLANCE

#### Industry

Social housing

#### The challenge

Bolster existing data protection processes in order to protect a raft of personal and sensitive tenant data.

#### The solution

Charge MTI with carrying out in-depth risk assessment and advise on areas that need strengthening.

#### Benefits

- Watertight protection for sensitive data
- Expert consultancy transfers essential knowledge to staff
- Detached professionalism that met objectives within budget parameters
- Personalised training sessions



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The organisation had a number of security policies in place, covering a wide range of actions. However, it wanted to beef up data protection to ensure it was as robust as it could possibly be. Paul added: “When I joined the organization, there was a list of things to do and one was to double check and enhance data security. We had good practises in place but we didn’t want to take chances. If we were to suffer a data breach, the fines from the Information Commissioner can be hefty, up to £500,000. But more than that, a data breach could also cause irreparable reputational damage.”

## THE SOLUTION

The organisation contacted a number of security providers, one of which was global solutions and services provider MTI. Four Housing had an existing relationship with MTI based on hardware and firewalls that it had supplied and implemented over the previous years.

Paul Carmody said: “We were very impressed with MTI and its flexibility. MTI understood what we were looking for. The team was willing to tailor its data consultancy to our needs and adopted a practical approach, providing the data consultancy within our budget parameters.”

Consequently, Four Housing charged MTI with carrying out an assessment of its processes and practices. As a result, MTI allocated one of its experienced data protection consultants to Four Housing to undertake a comprehensive survey.

## BUSINESS BENEFITS



### COMPREHENSIVE RISK ASSESSMENT

Initially, the MTI data protection consultant spent one week on site mapping out Four Housing technologies that enabled compliance with the Data Protection Act, as well as interviewing members of staff, including housing officers, to assess levels of understanding and data protection behaviours.

For example, the consultant wanted to see how data was categorised, whether sensitive information sent to local authorities was encrypted, and whether staff knew how to encrypt data using existing technologies. “It was a comprehensive assessment that provided a foundation for the consultant to draft an executive report mapping out what needed to be done to ensure the most rigorous protection possible,” said Paul Carmody.



### DETAILED INSIGHT

The MTI consultant drafted the report within a few weeks, outlining the areas that needed to be addressed. Paul Carmody said: “It was reassuring to discover that, generally, staff had a good awareness of data protection and, in most instances, we had data protection well covered.

“MTI’s knowledge of data protection is extremely good, and they highlighted a few important areas for improvement, such as encryption of email data. But there was no hard sell from MTI, they pointed out that we had the technology in place; it was just a question of utilising it to the best effect.”



## BUSINESS BENEFITS



### THE HIGHEST STANDARDS

Although Four Housing's data protection processes were already at a high level, the MTI assessment highlighted a few areas that needed tightening up. "There were about six or seven issues that needed addressing. The assessment brought these to light, allowing us to meet our objectives of having the best data protection possible," said Paul Carmody.



### PROFESSIONAL CONSIDERATION

Deep knowledge and expertise to one side, a major element that further impressed Four Housing was MTI's professional approach and focus on the task in hand rather than using the consultancy to leverage further business.



### PERSONALISED TRAINING

MTI organised training sessions for Four Housing staff, taking place in its Berwick-upon-Tweed and Durham offices, led by the MTI consultant. The session content was informed by the areas highlighted in the executive report.

"I was kept in the loop all the time in terms of staff concerns and training, there wasn't any time when I didn't know what was happening. MTI's consultant was extremely approachable and helpful. Her knowledge around data protection was second to none," added Paul Carmody.

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