

# Gravesham Borough Council Increases First-time Access Success and Streamlines Customer Interaction



## About Gravesham Borough Council

Gravesham Borough Council is a stock-retaining local authority that provides a wide range of frontline services to its residents. The Council is committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce.

## The customer communication challenge

Gravesham realised that customer expectations have changed in response to consumer experiences from the likes of Amazon and Uber. When it comes to repair appointments, customers expect real-time updates and precise ETA windows. They don't want to spend time chasing their appointment on the phone.

The Council was looking for a solution that could meet these customer expectations, while also driving down no-access rates. Oneserve and Descartes delivered a solution that increased first-time access, reduced follow up phone calls, and streamlined the feedback process.

## The solution

Gravesham Borough Council implemented Oneserve's Job Management software during 2017 in a bid for paperless processes. They have since been managing their entire repairs and property maintenance works within Oneserve, resulting in significant cost savings and a more efficient workforce.

Oneserve was able to offer the Descartes Customer Engagement Platform™ to track service appointments. The solution keeps customers in the loop before, during and after their appointment.

## Working with Oneserve and Descartes

Implementation of the solution was smooth, thanks to Oneserve's integration with the Descartes Customer Engagement Platform. The Oneserve team was able to provide updates and training sessions throughout the process, so it was easy to get the Gravesham team on board.

Nicole Arthur, Head of Housing Assets at Gravesham, explains: "To anyone considering the solution, I would say go for it. It's really good value and there are so many extra benefits in addition to reducing no-access. Customer expectations are high because of services like Amazon: they don't want to wait in long call queues or be given five-hour ETA windows. The solution really modernises how we work."

## Notifications and tracking

When the operative is on their way, the customer receives an SMS containing a 15-minute ETA window. The message links to the customer portal, where the customer can view key appointment details to help them prepare and track the operative's arrival on a map.

With proactive notifications and tracking, customers can take back control of their day.

"Previously, customers would be provided a morning or afternoon slot, and they felt that they had to wait at home for hours. Now customers receive a message to say the operative is on the way, so they don't have to sit at home waiting the whole time," says Elena Napoliello, Housing Operations Team Leader at Gravesham Borough Council.

Moving beyond the customer experience, Gravesham has also reported significant operational benefits, including a 26% decrease in no-access rates thanks to proactive communications.

## Follow-up messages

If the operative is unable to access the property, customers receive a further SMS to let them know that the job hasn't been completed. The customer is prompted to contact Gravesham to book a follow-up visit.

This reduces the need for Gravesham to telephone each customer who requires a new appointment.

Elena explains: "It's not easy to phone every single person who needs to book in a follow-up. When the customer gets a text to say they need to book an appointment, this reduces the number of customers that we need to call."

## Two-way chat

The customer portal allows customers to chat directly with their mobile operative. This reduces missed appointments and makes it easier for operatives to complete their work.

For instance, if the customer has gone out for a few minutes, they can let the operative know that they'll be back soon. There's no need for the customer to phone the contact centre and wait in a call queue.

Elena confirms: "We now have closer communication with the customers without them having to ring us. If they've had to pop out for five minutes, it's a lot easier for them to directly contact the operative, rather than them having to ring up, sit in the call queue and potentially miss their appointment."

## Feedback

Traditionally, the Council had telephoned a sample of customers after their appointment to ask for feedback. Customers would typically respond with 'yes' or 'no' answers, rather than giving detailed information.

With the new solution, each customer receives a feedback request immediately after their appointment. The request is sent via SMS, and links to a simple survey in the customer portal. The customer has the option to submit a rating, answer specific questions and provide written feedback. This gives a more detailed and nuanced picture of the customer experience.

Elena explains: "Since customers can respond in their own time via their phone, we get a lot more feedback. They give more detailed answers rather than simply confirming that they're happy and the job is done."

Nicole Arthur, Head of Housing Assets at Gravesham, adds: "The feedback solution has allowed us to scale back our customer satisfaction calls to focus on customers who need it. For example, we can telephone customers who submit a low star rating rather than phoning a certain percentage across the board."

Since launching the solution, the Council has achieved 76% 5-star ratings for appointments using the solution. Compliments are also shared internally to increase visibility of the great work that operatives are doing.