



## Russell Thompson

Executive Director of Property Services  
Thirteen Group

**thirteen**  
Managing and building homes

“When customers have a repair need, what they want is resolution - not an appointment. It is up to us to get them that resolution as quickly as possible.”

Thirteen Group were well prepared for the lockdown. They even had time for a practice run of working from home before it formally began! With a VPN in place, Thirteen Group have eliminated the irritating requirement for staff to dial in to access their systems. Staff surveys have been conducted through the lockdown to get an idea of employee wellbeing and the organisation's Net Promoter Score has never been higher.

### Self-help systems

Thirteen Group have managed to continue triaging repairs calls and customers can now resolve issues for themselves with remote help. Using a system called Sight Call, customers contact Thirteen Group and the app sends a link to their phone. This enables a professional at Thirteen Group to see and manoeuvre the phone, diagnose the repair, and talk the customer through a resolution if possible. The app also allows Thirteen Group to take photos with the customer's phone if images need to be stored. Russell is trialling the approach for stock condition surveys in the future.

Like many other organisations, Thirteen Group have been quick to recognise the need to implement and develop a digital

lettings process which includes virtual tours of the properties. This allows the group to continue delivering services and removes all the associated risks to both staff and customers.

### Predictions

Preparing for remobilisation of services, Thirteen Group have launched a survey to all staff to get an idea of what the new normal might look like. Speculating on this question, Russell predicts:

- There will be less emphasis on both office working and having large office premises
- The fundamental agenda in housing won't change but the way we meet it will
- There will be more customer consultation and personalisation of services, as the day-to-day more straightforward services will be delivered by increasingly digital and automated means
- IT will go from being an enabler to a facilitator. IT will probably become an even greater business risk to consider
- There will be a renewed and targeted focus on mental health and employee wellbeing if remote and home working is going to feature more in the future.