

Meeting international standards with the help of Alemba Service Manager: Thirteen Housing achieves ISO accreditation



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Phil Nichols, IT Service Delivery Manager

Client	Thirteen Housing
In Brief	With Alemba Service Manager, the Thirteen Housing IT team was now able to visually show the automated process, from the initial email through to the creation of requests, the completion of tasks and the final outcome of granting or revoking access to equipment such as company laptops.
Business	Housing
Location	UK
Reach	1,600 staff 72,000 customers 38,000 properties

About Thirteen Housing

Thirteen Housing is a housing association based in Middlesbrough in the North East of the United Kingdom. The housing developer offers quality homes for rent and sale, as well as support for those in housing need.

With approximately 1,600 staff members supporting more than 72,000 customers and 38,000 properties, Thirteen Housing’s IT Department manages a complex portfolio of IT services to support the day-to-day operations of the business.

STAFF

1,600

CUSTOMERS

72k

PROPERTIES

38k

Top Priority: Adhering to International Information Security Standards

For Thirteen Housing, meeting international information security standards was a top priority.

Many of the funding opportunities available to the housing association were contingent on achieving certain levels of accreditation for schemes such as CyberEssentials, CyberEssentials Plus and ISO/IEC.

In addition, the association wished to strengthen their commitment to cyber security, especially in view of recent high-profile attacks on other public entities.

Thirteen Housing set their sights on achieving certification to ISO/IEC 27001, which provides requirements for information security management systems.

ISO's management system standards are comprehensive, covering processes across the entire business. One of the key requirements for obtaining ISO certification was a reliable system to validate data management for HR operations, and particularly the starter/leaver process.

The IT Department is tasked with managing HR Service Requests, including ensuring the proper distribution of equipment and access management for starters and leavers.

"With our previous ITSM software, the onboarding and off-boarding processes weren't very logical," says Phil Nichols, IT Service Delivery Manager at Thirteen Housing. "There was no reliable way to substantiate the activities undertaken and it became almost a matter of faith that things were being done the right way."

Alemba and Thirteen Housing: Establishing a Robust Starter/Leaver Process

Thirteen Housing deployed the Alemba Service Manager ITSM tool to reliably manage and monitor HR Service Requests.

"When we moved to Alemba Service Manager, one of the features I really liked was the visual layouts for the workflows for Requests," says Phil Nichols.

With the help of Alemba's consultants, Phil and his team set up email integration with Thirteen Housing's iTrent HR system which would trigger workflows within the Alemba Service Manager system.

The HR system is now set up to send email notifications when a team member joins or leaves the business, providing a predictable source of data for automating HR processes.

Based on the information held in that email, which forms the content of the Request, the Thirteen Housing team are now able to initiate sophisticated workflows to assign equipment to the right person, update the CMDB, and send requests to the relevant team members to approve access to the necessary systems.

Similarly, when an employee leaves the organisation, the workflow can create tasks for reclaiming equipment and revoking access based on the leave dates.

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Phil Nichols IT Service Delivery Manager

Achieving ISO/IEC 27001 accreditation

Thirteen Housing was successful in achieving ISO/IEC 27001 certification. Being able to demonstrate their starter/leaver process was robust from an IT perspective was a key factor in this achievement.

In the past, proving a compliant starter/leaver process was paper-based and reliant on a member of the IT staff explaining the process to assessors.

With Alemba Service Manager, the Thirteen Housing IT team was now able to visually show the automated process, from the initial email through to the creation of requests, the completion of tasks and the final outcome of granting or revoking access to equipment such as company laptops.

Crucially, the team was now safe in the knowledge that their process was accurate and reliable, with a clear audit trail to demonstrate which actions were performed when.

“The key thing was being able to show the whole workflow with the colour-coded statuses indicating whether a task was complete or active or had never been activated. It is also really useful being able to pinpoint the exact date of tasks,” Phil comments. “I really like that Alemba Service Manager breaks down a large piece of work such as a person leaving the business into discrete units of work that several people can work on and contribute to closing it off.”

Future Plans

What’s next for the Thirteen Housing team now that they have obtained ISO/IEC 27001 certification?

Phil Nichols is excited about the potential of Alemba Service Manager’s workflow engine: “We find Alemba Service Manager’s workflows really powerful and really useful and we’re hoping to take it even further with the latest version by using it to link into Microsoft’s Power Platform, which we are heavily invested in.”

The Thirteen Housing team plans to start using workflows to automate more of their simple tasks, such as disabling accounts outside of regular work hours in urgent situations.

In addition, the team plans to optimise their starters/leavers process further by investigating the use of a Power wrap with barcode scanning when working with returned equipment.