

## Housing Plus Group

Housing Plus Group was formed through a merger between Severnside Housing in Shropshire and South Staffordshire based Housing Plus, in October 2016. With 12,000 homes, 25,000 customers and 600 employees Housing Plus is a Community Benefit Society. The Group and its member companies work closely with its customers, partners and wider community to support thriving neighbourhoods and independent retirement living.



## Business Requirement

The Group started preparing for GDPR around 18 months ago. They started with the ICO 12 Steps to Take Now programme and had undertaken some work around the guidance offered, however, Tony Price - Policy, Research and Initiatives Manager, was keen to get an independent view on where the Group were compliant and where any gaps were. He undertook some due diligence by speaking with several different specialists, but in the end picked Data Protection People mainly due to the process being tailored to his organisation, and that **“the Director, David Hendry had plenty of experience within the Housing Association field and I felt confident that with his invaluable industry knowledge, he could do the job and deliver what we need”**.

## The Plan

DPP were employed to carry out a Healthcheck and Gap Analysis to demonstrate to the Group how they were performing against the existing Data Protection Act, and provide guidance and recommendations to ensure compliance in readiness for the GDPR. Once the proposal was signed off, Philip and Jason from DPP spent a day in each of their offices in Stafford and Shrewsbury, speaking to different members of staff regarding current data processes, policies and procedures. **“DPP were incredibly accommodating and flexible, answering all of our staff’s questions regarding the new regulations and putting at ease any worries. We had briefed our staff beforehand that this was a fantastic way for us to find any gaps in our policies and a perfect opportunity for their questions to be answered - from what I saw throughout the day, I felt it was a genuinely helpful exercise and was positive from start to finish. It was a good way to start people**

**thinking about GDPR as well”**. The Group ensured that DPP spoke with all the right people to gain a good feel of the depth of the business on both sites. Some key staff members were unable to be on site during the audit process, so these were followed up with conference calls to make sure all the information required to perform a suitable review was obtained. Once DPP had finished the 2 interview days, there were a few final queries to follow up over email and telephone and then we were able to write our findings up for Housing Group Plus.

## Business Match

The Group had already commenced their GDPR prepping journey, therefore it was important that reports were presented in a timely fashion to ensure the momentum of the project kept moving forward. The draft report was received within 3 weeks and the whole project from start to finish was just a 6 week turn around. The Gap Analysis report provided the Group with an action plan and various recommendations to work through, as well as reassurance that there weren't any nasty surprises! Confirmation of the current gaps and good practice links were also provided as well as guidance with general elements surrounding GDPR that allow for a better understanding of the project. **“DPP produced a helpful report and gap analysis in a timely manner that allowed us to develop an action plan that we are implementing now to work towards GDPR compliance. Knowing that we are able to go back to them with any queries has been invaluable, they know how to go the extra mile. It's great to work with such a professional, helpful company and I wouldn't hesitate to further our relationship going forward”**. DPP's account management policy means that their exclusive Account Manager, Usman, is in contact with them on a regular basis and is able to answer any GDPR related queries they may have to help them keep driving the project forward in the correct manner, in fact, as Tony points out **“It's great to hear from Usman on a regular basis just as a check-in. It's refreshing not to feel hounded to purchase something new or constantly feel like we are being upsold to, just knowing that he's on hand to respond to our queries and chat issues through is invaluable”**.