



## Case Study:

### Bolton at Home



## Background

Bolton at Home is a registered charity that owns and manages 18,000 social housing properties formerly owned by Bolton Council in Bolton Borough. It is working with Bolton Borough Council and other agencies to improve the social and economic conditions of its housing estates and other disadvantaged areas in the borough, delivering £124 million of improvements to homes and estates.

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### Situation

Bolton at Home has to ensure that properties are cleared of rubbish, made secure if necessary, and then cleaned so they are ready for the new occupants. Sometimes the changeover of a tenant can mean that a property can be vacant for a period of time. As a result vacant properties can be a target for criminals and blight local communities, therefore it is essential they are secured properly to protect the property so it can be reoccupied quickly and reduce the risk of vandals, squatters or arson attacks.

### Solution

Bolton at Home appointed VPS on an ongoing contract basis valued at £650,000 per annum to act as a 'one-stop-shop' and provide a range of responsive, cost effective vacant property services.

Once a tenant moves out, VPS clears the property of general rubbish and undertakes a garden clearance with additional services if required, such as fumigations, needle sweeps, and graffiti removal. VPS then makes the properties secure using a combination of physical and electronic security, which is quick to install, and can be deployed rapidly in high risk properties.

For low risk vacant properties VPS provides close-weave, minimum vision net curtains installed internally so the property appears to be occupied. Higher risk properties may be fitted with steel screens or more discrete polymer screens on the windows to stop intruders gaining access and prevent internal damage, theft and arson attacks.

Electronic security such as the VPS SmartAlarm is also rapidly deployed to provide instant security. Sensors provide immediate detection and report on a range of

incidents including intruders, flooding and fire. Entirely free-standing they use wireless GSM mobile phone technology and a long life battery so mains power or phone line are not required.

Before a new tenant arrives, VPS returns to the property to remove the security measures and clean it after any remedial work has been completed.

### The Outcome

VPS completes on average 80 clear and cleans a week for Bolton at Home, often with a 24 hour lead time, and an average of 20 security jobs a week. VPS has been working in partnership to provide Bolton at Home with security services since July 2008, and have been undertaking clearing and cleaning since December 2009.

Work is carried out to the client's specification with quarterly review meetings to make sure standards and services are upheld, and meeting the expectations of both Bolton at Home, and its tenants.

Mark Delaney, Senior Project Manager, at Bolton at Home said: "Employing specialists such as VPS, means that they can use their expertise to take care of any requirements relating to our void properties effectively and efficiently, helping us to improve the social and economic conditions of our estate and meet our Key Performance Indicators. Communication is key and is strong with the VPS team, helping them to ensure over 99% of properties are cleared, secured and cleaned within a range of set response times."

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