



CASE STUDY

Home Group keeps customer data safe

Cost savings reinvested in helping people fulfill their housing aspirations

Business situation

Retiring an aging data center

Housing is a basic need, but for many, it's also a personal dream. As one of the UK's largest providers of high-quality housing and integrated housing, health and social care, Home Group exists to help society's most vulnerable find a safe place to live. There is a lot of data that goes into delivering on this promise. Employees need to navigate everything from managing real estate availabilities and customer profiles to coordinating support services and property maintenance. This data needs to be easily accessible so employees can focus on their mission.

As it reached its end of life, Home Group's existing data center had become slow to operate, distracting the organization from its strong social mission to address critical IT inefficiencies. It faced a decision: invest in an expensive infrastructure upgrade or move to the cloud. The choice seemed easy, if it had a partner who could ensure a complete migration to **Microsoft Azure** – its preferred platform. That included the multiple mission-critical workloads it had on another system. Home Group wanted to avoid the risk of paying for two partially operational platforms, as well the governance challenges and inefficiencies of managing multiple platforms.

Home Group partnered with Avanade to help it find a defined, reliable path toward a data center exit that would release the costs of operating a large data center while keeping customer data secure, refocus capital on building affordable housing and open new opportunities for future innovations.

Solution

Moving the IT estate and offloading management to recenter on customer service

After analyzing Home Group's existing environment, we helped design and build the target landing zone for the organization's data and workloads that help place

Company Name: Home Group

Country: UK

Industry: Government and Public Services, Nonprofit

Solutions: Avanade Managed Services, Microsoft Azure Platform Services

people who can't afford market rents in good quality homes. We then implemented our hybrid cloud solution for a quick and complete lift and shift to an Azure platform that also offers private cloud hosting. This flexible mix ensures any incompatible workloads are supported. With legacy data centers fully retired, Avanade **Managed Services** will allow Home Group to realize continuous value from its cloud operations by capitalizing on new technologies, even with limited resources.

"We agreed to a fix-forward mentality. So, if there were issues, get the right people on the call – and they were always available – and then just work through it, making sure that we weren't causing too much disruption to customers. It was very much lift – change as little as possible, move across to Azure," says Si Anderson, head of service management and cybersecurity at Home Group. "Once we got [the servers] there, we needed to right-size for budgetary constraints. Avanade had to bring the knowledge around which systems were key and which ones we could take more of a risk with."

"Home Group gets the benefit of cloud economics," says Chris Coveyduck, distinguished engineer at Avanade. "The cloud enables mobility – more services available from anywhere so housing management and support workers are more efficient and service their customers better."

Results

Cost savings reinvested to make a difference in the lives of others

“This change has allowed us to really drive forward in our direct customer engagement,” says Simon Parker, director of information services and the project management office at Home Group.

“In the cloud environment, we can often create new applications very quickly, very easily. We can try things, and if it doesn’t work, we can shut it down and we can move on.”

Simon Parker

Director, Information Services and the Project Management Office, Home Group

One successful application allows Home Group customers to raise questions about their property, set up direct debits and interact with Home Group representatives online.

Avanade’s end-to-end approach simplified the process and removed any friction in the journey to the cloud. It also:

- Accelerated the migration while minimizing risk
- Preserves the safety of customer data
- Enabled more access and control at lower costs by delivering the solution through Avanade’s nearshore [Advanced Technology Center](#)
- Improved scalability and resilience

“We have lots of calls upon our cash, whether we invest in building new homes, improving existing homes, maximizing how we spend our customers’ money. They give us their rent, which we use to reinvest back into their properties,” says John Hudson, chief financial officer at Home Group.

“Efficiency means spending that money wisely, but also means giving our colleagues the tools they need to deliver great customer service.”

John Hudson

Chief Financial Officer, Home Group

Home Group avoided a big capital investment in infrastructure updates that also came with an expiration date. Released from the costs and restrictions of operating a large data center, it now has more time to focus on its core mission: building better services and helping people achieve their independence and aspirations.

About Home Group

Home Group is a housing association, social enterprise and charity with a turnover of £430m and one of the UK’s largest providers of high-quality housing and integrated housing, health and social care. Proud of the difference that it has made over the last 80+ years, Home Group continues to work hard to support 113,000 customers in 55,000 homes across the UK. Its aim is to build homes, independence and aspirations. Home Group is the 7th best place to work in the UK, the 4th best in the Northeast and the 6th best for women. Its apprenticeship program is award winning; in 2019, Home Group was named large employer of the year and large Northeast employer of the year in 2020. Home Group is also a Stonewall top 100 employer, ranked at 18th.

About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital, cloud and advisory services, industry solutions and design-led experiences across the Microsoft ecosystem. Every day, our 58,000 professionals in 26 countries make a genuine human impact for our clients, their employees and their customers. Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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