

SECTOR EDITION

HOUSING TRENDS REPORT

2025



Technology
Infrastructure



Productivity



Artificial
Intelligence

CONTENTS

Introduction: Embracing Change	04
01 Skills & Talent	06
02 The Procurement Act	10
03 Technology Infrastructure	14
04 The Cloud	18
05 Artificial Intelligence (AI)	22
06 Environment, Social & Governance (ESG)	24
07 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I)	28
08 Cybersecurity	30
09 Conclusions	34
10 About OneAdvanced	36



INTRODUCTION: EMBRACING CHANGE



Leveraging data from the One Advanced Business Trends Report 2024/2025, this report looks at how technology is being used in the UK social housing sector, and the extent to which housing providers are using digital tools to provide better outcomes for tenants and employees.

Over 6,000 professionals were surveyed for the Business Trends Report, from a wide range of industry sectors including health and care, central and local government, finance, manufacturing, IT, construction, and education.

The main challenges for the social housing sector this year include:

- **Attracting and retaining talent**
- **Improving the customer experience**
- **Growth and the ability to scale**
- **Implementing emerging technology**

These challenges alone represent a significant amount to deal with, but combined with budgetary pressures, new and emerging legislation, and an uncertain economic landscape, it appears the sector is facing an uphill battle.

With uncertainty comes caution, and it is therefore unsurprising that many social housing providers are looking for cost savings while waiting to gain clarity over government policy, including NI contributions and the additional grant funding needed for social housing.

It is therefore crucial that each organisation is getting value for money from their technology provider, with digital solutions that are flexible and adaptable to change. The cloud is perhaps the best example of a technology that is cost effective, scalable, and future-proofed; housing providers will be well served by exploring the advantages of cloud migration.

The importance of accurate and accessible data will be key to the management of new legislation, including the Procurement Act. On the question of readiness for the Act, 19% of spend and procurement professionals say they are well prepared, 65% say they are partly prepared, and 12% say they are poorly prepared. Here, digital solutions that offer enhanced data visibility and built in transparency frameworks will deliver a significant advantage.

Below, we look at emerging trends, identify common challenges, and pinpoint where the social housing sector is starting to make positive change through technology. We look at the critical role digital tools have to play in helping housing providers achieve better outcomes through enhanced tenant communication, improved performance management, better data accuracy, cloud computing, AI, and automation.



SKILLS & TALENT



01

19%

have fully flexible working arrangements



As with last year's report, skills and talent shortages remain the biggest problem faced by UK organisations today. In the social housing sector, 30% identify attraction and retention as the primary concern for their organisation, nearly double the industry-wide average of 16%.

For nearly half (46%) of our social housing sector respondents, attracting and retaining talent is a core business priority over the next 12 months. This is the highest figure across all industry, and suggests skills shortages are a particular problem in the sector.

While these shortages exist in back office and leadership roles, they are primarily seen in the areas of construction, and repairs and maintenance: according to Citb [research](#), an additional 250,000 workers will be needed to meet the government's housebuilding target of 1.5m homes (50% social or affordable) within the next five years.

To this end, the government has created a new initiative, Skills England, to cope with the extra demand. This should mean the development of new apprenticeship-style courses for those in post-16 education, with an emphasis on construction and engineering. Apprenticeship providers will need to ensure they have the necessary digital management tools in place to cope with additional learners.

When it comes to pay and benefits for office workers, the social housing sector is typically unable to compete with the private sector. However, better attraction can be achieved through reputation – if the organisation is seen as a good place to work, with clear opportunities for progression and motivated staff, it becomes a more attractive proposition for future employees.

Having the latest technology in place can further help with attraction. For generations that are comfortable with cloud computing and AI, organisations that show a willingness to move with the times can better attract employees with the required skillsets.

Similarly, digital tools can go some way to improving staff retention. The latest performance management solutions move the organisation away from an outdated annual appraisal model towards real-time feedback for completed projects, and the ability to offer praise to any member of the team and wider organisation, ensuring the right people get recognised for their work.

These solutions can help senior leaders pinpoint employees suitable for progression, with summative assessments drawn from historic feedback, and can be used to help set clear individual or group objectives, improving employee motivation and sense of purpose.

Another way to find (and retain) employees with the necessary skills and knowledge is through flexible working arrangements. Offering fully remote or hybrid working patterns can bring a wider pool of talent, and, in many cases a better work/life balance for employees.

This type of working is recognised as important by our social housing providers: 28% say they have a hybrid working arrangement with two days in-office – second only to central and local government (32%). Nearly a fifth (19%) tell us they have a fully flexible working arrangement in line with operational needs, compared to a figure of 14% across industry as a whole.

These numbers suggest the social housing sector is at the forefront when it comes to offering flexible working arrangements. To make further improvements in this area, the sector should look towards increasing the provision of secure, cloud-based systems that provide the level of flexibility and collaboration needed to streamline remote and hybrid working.

02



THE PROCUREMENT ACT



With enhanced transparency, the public will be able to see how their money is being spent, and suppliers will have a fairer chance of securing government contracts based on societal and environmental impact, in a move away from Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) to Most Advantageous Tender (MAT).

Preparation is key to a smooth transition, and stretches beyond the 'go live' date of February 24, 2025, to allow for a natural period of adjustment – put simply, housing providers will not be punished if they don't have all of their ducks in a row straight away.

On the question of preparedness, 19% of procurement and spend professionals across all sectors say they are fully prepared for the new Act, 65% say they are moderately prepared, and 12% believe they are poorly prepared.

When asked about the foreseeable challenges associated with the Act, managing increased administrative burden is seen as a particular problem (57%), along with monitoring compliance (50%), and understanding the new requirements (37%).

For those who already have plans in place, 60% are investing in new compliance measures, 59% are revising procurement procedures, 49% are training staff on the new regulations, and 37% are investing in new technology.

Having the right technology in place will be key to successful outcomes. The optimal solution will provide an integrated platform for all spend and procurement needs, from sourcing and supplier management to contract management, and include transparency frameworks for the required notices at each stage of the procurement process.

Since the Act extends the procurement lifecycle to include pre-procurement, contract management and termination, procurement leads will need to be given far greater scope and authority. This will mean an expanded role that incorporates strategic decision making and closer integration with contract managers and finance teams – a single, commercial function that will be better placed to handle the new requirements.

In terms of training provision, the government has released a series of e-learning modules via the [Government Commercial College](#) (GCC). For employees who only require a general understanding of the Act, the government's [Knowledge Drops](#) page offers a high-level overview of the changes.

37%

are investing in new technology to manage the Procurement Act



The Procurement Act 2023 represents a sea change in how procurement teams manage their processes, with transparency notices required at every stage of the procurement life cycle. The aim is to allow more flexibility over how goods and services are procured, with greater opportunity for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and sustainable suppliers.

TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE



03

Modernising or replacing IT infrastructure is critical for social housing providers dealing with outdated systems and end of life software. It is not a process that can be done overnight, and comes attached with a number of considerations including price, data security, and know-how.

By modernising tech infrastructure, social housing providers will be opening up the possibilities of cloud-based services and AI-embedded applications – see our sections on the Cloud and AI below to find out how housing providers are faring when it comes to the utilisation of these technologies.

When asked about IT infrastructure, 28% tell us they are very confident that their current setup fully supports their business goals, 58% say they are confident, and 14% say they are either unsure or not confident. These figures are highly comparable to industry as a whole – an average of 32% report they are very confident in their IT infrastructure, and over half (53%) say they are confident.

Although these figures indicate general trust in current technology infrastructure, the social housing sector must have complete confidence that their systems can effectively support their business objectives – especially in critical areas like tenant communication and field service management.

How housing providers respond to the needs of their tenants now forms part of the Social Housing Regulation Act, with strict new rules surrounding tenant health and safety, and the complaints procedure. Housing providers should ensure they have digital systems in place that allow for two-way communication, out of hours notices, and the scheduling of repairs and maintenance.

On the question of deploying repairs and maintenance staff, 39% of social housing providers say this is done entirely digitally, 54% tell us this is done mostly digitally but with some use of paper, and 7% say this is carried out mostly on paper, but with some use of digital. While moving in the right direction – last year, 34% of respondents reporting taking an entirely digital approach – the sector must continue to move towards fully digital systems. Eliminating paper-based processes ensures data is stored securely and supports ESG initiatives.

When asked to report on the biggest challenges in managing the deployment of repairs and maintenance staff, 48% say that a siloed approach to deploying staff is a significant issue, 39% tell us they face inefficiencies in the way in which residents are able to report repairs, and 24% say they face difficulties when maintaining different systems operating in separate departments.

In fact, better systems integration is cited by the majority of our respondents across all sectors (24%) as a change that would have the biggest impact on their operations. The number is higher again in the social housing sector (26%), suggesting a material need for integrated digital systems. With integrated systems in place, social housing providers will be able to improve data accuracy, streamline stakeholder reporting, and quickly retrieve tenant data.

24%

say better systems integration would have the biggest effect on their operations



04



THE CLOUD

47%

of social housing providers are using entirely cloud-based solutions – the highest number of any industry sector



Our survey reveals that nearly half (47%) of social housing providers are using entirely cloud-based solutions – the highest number of any industry sector. 16% tell us they use only on-premise systems, and 35% say they use a combination of cloud and on-premise. Compared to last year's survey, in which only 29% of respondents said they use solely cloud applications, the numbers this year show a sector unafraid to lead the pack when it comes to cloud migration.

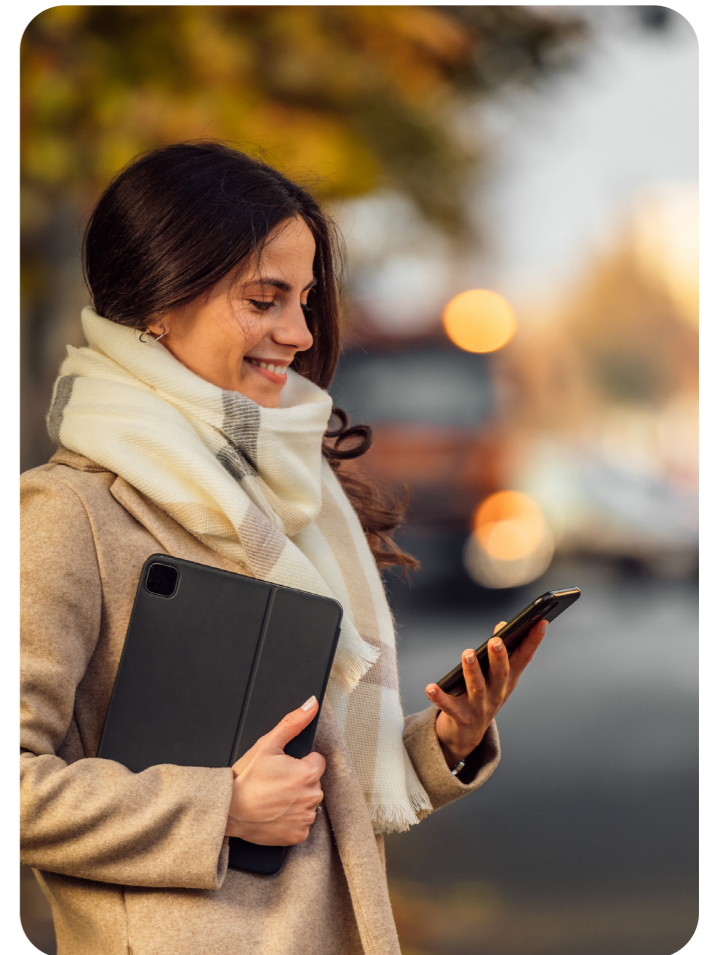
For social housing providers that haven't yet fully moved to the cloud, most will be taking an incremental approach, on a needs-first basis. For those that have moved entirely, there are many immediate and long-term benefits, including:

- **Cost** – utilising the Software as a Service (SaaS) model, housing providers can drive cost savings by eliminating software licenses, reducing energy consumption and negating the need for costly server replacement.
- **Scalability** – the organisation can scale the cloud resources they use up and down, depending on processes and needs.
- **Accessibility** – cloud-based applications can accommodate users with a wide range of needs, and can be used anywhere with an internet connection, facilitating collaborative and flexible working.
- **Rapid deployment** – using a managed service from a trusted technology partner, data can be migrated from on-premise servers to the cloud quickly and securely.
- **Carbon footprint** – cloud computing utilises technologies such as visualisation and multi-tenancy to reduce the number of servers needed, resulting in lower overall emissions.

There are considerations to bear in mind when choosing a fully cloud-based model. Security is certainly a factor, as 2024's CrowdStrike breach showed, and to this end, housing providers will need to be confident that their cloud platform offers high levels of protection. In fact, the data bears this out, with 83% reporting that they have confidence in the security of their current cloud technology. At the same time, 4% say they are maintaining a combination of on-premise and cloud technology to mitigate future threat.

When sensitive data is stored fully in the cloud, it is important to remember that the overall responsibility for this data lies with the organisation, not the technology provider. It is therefore worth checking where data will be stored; choosing to partner with a UK-based provider does not guarantee data is stored in the UK.

Network connectivity and bandwidth are a further consideration. IT teams will need to evaluate existing network infrastructure and bandwidth capacity to ensure they are able to support the data transfer requirements between on-premise and the cloud.



05

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)



While there is little doubt that AI has the potential to transform social housing management, there is understandable hesitancy among those in the sector when it comes to widespread implementation.

Part of this hesitancy concerns funding, particularly in light of the government's removal of the Tech and AI investment fund. Nearly one fifth (19%) of social housing professionals in our survey say that schools and colleges need more government investment to prepare the workforce for the future of AI.

Cost is cited by 30% as a barrier to the implementation of new technology, so it is unsurprising to learn that AI is fully embedded in only 9% of organisations. However, 16% say they are exploring AI applications for suitability across a range of functions. This compares closely to central and local government (17%).

Most in the social housing sector believe AI implementation will lead to positive outcomes. 39% say AI will reduce time spent on arduous repetitive tasks, 21% say it will help address workplace shortages, and 25% are confident AI will improve carbon footprint and ESG reporting. Some resistance remains: 7% believe AI will have no positive impact on their organisation.

For those already using AI, 30% say it enables a better and more responsive customer experience. Whether using chatbots or other intelligent response applications, social housing providers will need to look at efficient methods of communication to improve the tenant experience and align themselves with the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Act.

For those that have tried and failed to implement an AI project over the past 12 months, the majority point to insufficient skills as the main barrier: 67% tell us they did not have the right skills and experience to successfully manage the project.

It is important to have employees in place with the necessary time and know-how to manage AI projects successfully, whether they are found in-house, or from a 3rd party. Data must be accurate, complete, and categorised prior to the implementation of critical new projects.

If possible, experienced AI consultants should be brought in to the fold at the planning stage in order to help define clear outcomes: one third (33%) of respondents said they did not fully understand the problem they thought they were addressing, while 44% said they underestimated the amount of data expertise needed.

For those that have not tried to implement a new AI project in the past 12 months (65%), 19% cite budgetary constraint as a limiting factor. Nearly half (49%) say they are currently reviewing AI implementation plans, while 22% state concerns over AI adoption. This suggests a sector cautiously optimistic about AI – a sensible approach given time and cost restrictions.

39%

believe AI will reduce time spent on repetitive tasks

06



ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL & GOVERNANCE (ESG)



↓
To reach the government’s target of net zero by 2050, the social housing sector will have a vital role to play: around 17% of the UK housing stock comprises social housing, including homes run by housing associations and local authorities.

Our survey results show that net zero objectives are being taken seriously by social housing providers: 63% have a comprehensive ESG strategy in place, compared to 38% in the previous year. Nearly one fifth (18%) say they are prioritising ESG activities where possible, 9% say they are not currently prioritising ESG, and 11% say they do not know whether they have an ESG strategy in place.

While the latter of these statistics represents an improvement on last year’s survey (in which 18% of respondents said they were unaware of any ESG policy), it does, however, show there is more work to be done when it comes to organisation-wide awareness of ESG matters. To fix this, social housing providers will need to ensure they have robust ESG policy in place at board level, and that ESG objectives are communicated across the organisation.

Digital tools can help in this regard, offering clarity on objectives, and streamlining policy creation. Using meetings and board management software, decisions can be recorded and tracked, giving attendees and senior leaders clear visibility on deadlines. By maintaining detailed records, housing providers will be enhancing transparency and accountability.

Risk management software should form part of the overall solution, allowing organisations to identify, monitor, and mitigate risk while offering visibility on opportunities for growth.

Our survey shows that where ESG strategy is in place, this typically results in the widespread use of technology to help meet emissions targets. 40% of social housing providers use the cloud to support ESG objectives, 28% use carbon footprint motoring, 14% use AI, and 25% practice sustainable supplier management.

While meeting legislative requirements is a key driver for 33% of our social housing sector respondents, 32% tell us that they prioritise ESG initiative in order to make a positive impact on their local community, and 33% say they have an ESG strategy in place to measure the social value of their organisation.

Having the right people in place to carry through ESG initiatives will be key to successful ongoing delivery. Skills shortages are particularly evident in the social housing sector, mainly in construction and maintenance and repairs, but also in tech-related roles and at leadership level.

These shortages can be addressed partly through upskilling and CPD in-house, while the rapid growth of T-level and apprenticeship programmes will go some way to competing the picture – there are now over 200 green apprenticeship courses offered at various levels, compared to just 70 in 2022.

63% have a comprehensive ESG strategy



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DE&I)

07

Having a comprehensive DE&I strategy in place brings multiple benefits to organisations of all sizes, yet it is often underdeveloped or overlooked. Just 25% of our overall respondents say that DE&I is fundamental to their operations, with a clear strategy owned and driven by senior leaders.

In the social housing sector, the figure is only slightly higher (26%), suggesting there is more work to do when it comes to maintaining a clearly defined DE&I strategy. This is not to say DE&I is being ignored: 21% describe DE&I initiatives as very important, the same number tell us they work hard to remove bias in the recruitment process, 14% say they conduct voluntary pay gap reporting, and 11% say they have programmes dedicated to inclusionary practices.

In this sense, the picture is positive, but to truly unlock the benefits of DE&I, the sector must take a committed approach to strong policymaking and strategic leadership at board level, with inclusionary practices embedded throughout the organisation. Here, technology can play a vital role, with digital governance platforms that track and record DE&I objectives, and speed up strategic decision making.

Diversity pay gap reporting is another area of focus. In last year's survey, 34% of social housing sector respondents told us they conduct diversity pay gap reporting, compared to just 14% this time around. While gender pay gap reporting is mandated by law for organisations with more than 250 staff, diversity pay gap reporting remains entirely voluntary.

It may be that in times of economic uncertainty, voluntary pay gap reporting is put on the back burner. But by publishing diversity pay gap figures, organisations will be demonstrating transparency, showing that they are taking pay disparities seriously, and signalling their commitment to addressing and resolving these inequalities.

There are several additional benefits to implementing DE&I initiatives, including:

- **Addressing skills shortages** – recruiting and hiring from a diverse range of backgrounds delivers new perspectives and experiences.
- **Reducing attrition** – when an organisation embraces difference, employees are more likely to feel motivated and connected.
- **Reputational advantage** – by maintain a diverse workforce, organisations will become an attractive proposition for a wider range of stakeholders and investors.
- **Representation** – employees from diverse backgrounds can better understand and represent the communities they serve.

When in place, the benefits of DE&I integration are recognised by the majority of our social housing sector respondents: 42% tell us inclusionary practices have made a positive contribution to their organisation, while nearly one third (32%) say they have strengthened organisational performance and culture.

14%

conduct diversity pay gap reporting

CYBERSECURITY



08

Housing associations and other social housing providers have been victim to a number of serious cyber-attacks in recent years, driving home the need for greater vigilance and more robust security measures.

Such attacks can have damaging consequences, including the exposure of sensitive tenant data, reputational damage to the organisation, loss of work, loss of data, and significant cost to the public purse.

Phishing is by far the most common method used by hackers to gain network entry: the government's [Cyber Security Breaches Survey](#) released in April 2024 revealed that 84% of businesses and 83% of charities had experienced phishing attempts in the previous 12 months.

Our social housing sector respondents are well aware of the threat, with over half (51%) telling us that employee engagement with scams and phishing emails is a weak link when it comes to protecting organisational data and systems. Similar figures are found in other public sector organisations, including education (47%) and central and local government (50%).

To combat the likelihood of employees falling for phishing attempts, social housing providers will need to resource or develop robust training plans covering how to spot scam emails and messages, how to identify suspicious links and attachments, and how to report suspected phishing attempts.

Employees will also need to be made aware of the importance of password protection. 39% of our housing sector respondents tell us that employee carelessness when updating passwords presents a threat to the organisation. When employees reuse the same password across multiple applications, the attack surface is increased, and networks are more likely to become compromised.

To reduce the attack surface of IT infrastructure, SSO (single sign on) backed by MFA (multifactor authentication) is a common approach, allowing admins to set conditional access, and relieving employees from the burden of remembering multiple passwords for a variety of applications.

Another area to consider is the cloud. While cloud systems are generally considered more secure than on-premise servers, social housing providers will need to feel confident that their technology provider offers high levels of protection, with frequent data backups and comprehensive security features and controls.

Over one third (37%) say they are concerned about data held in the cloud, an understandable position given the proliferation of ever-evolving threats and the amount of sensitive data at stake. However, the majority (83%) tell us they are either mostly or very confident in the security of their cloud-based technology.

Our survey suggests that the social housing sector is keenly aware of the potential for data breaches, and where they are most likely to originate. It follows that 68% of our respondents say they are more prepared for a cyber-attack than they were 12 months ago. This compares to a figure of 55% in last year's survey, an encouraging positive trend.



68%

are more prepared for a cyber-attack than they were 12 months ago





CONCLUSIONS

09

Despite facing a myriad of challenges, including economic uncertainty and legislative change, the social housing sector is taking a forward-thinking approach to technology, particularly when it comes to cloud adoption – 47% tell us they are using entirely cloud-based solutions – the highest number in our survey.

Cloud-based systems allow the sector to future proof operations, with applications that improve tenant engagement, enhance data visibility, and manage the deployment of maintenance and repairs teams. The cloud is cost effective, allows organisations to scale with ease, and streamlines flexible and hybrid working – a practice carried out by 88% of our respondents.

Cyber security is high on the agenda for social housing providers, a sensible approach given the volume of recent attacks on the public sector. Nearly 7 in 10 tell us they are more prepared for a cyber attack than they were 12 months ago, and identify common weaknesses that include employees falling for phishing attempts and weak password protection.

Environmental responsibilities are also being taken seriously – 63% say they have a comprehensive ESG strategy in place, compared to just 38% in last year’s survey. The sector is harnessing the power of technology to meet its ESG targets with cloud-based systems, AI, carbon footprint monitoring, and sustainable supplier management.

One area for improvement is in ensuring that diversity and inclusion initiatives form a core part of strategy and day to day practices, particularly in the areas of recruitment and

pay gap reporting. Maintaining DE&I initiatives can play a key role in reducing workplace shortages and skills gaps, areas requiring urgent attention – 46% tell us attraction and retention is their number one challenge.

On the subject of current systems, 28% say they are very confident that their technology infrastructure meets their business goals, a figure just below the industry average of 32%. Nearly a quarter (24%) tell us that better systems integration would have the biggest impact on their operations.

Better systems integration will have a positive effect on record keeping and data accuracy, particularly when it comes to field service management – 57% of our respondents tell us they are still using paper to some degree when deploying maintenance and repairs operatives.

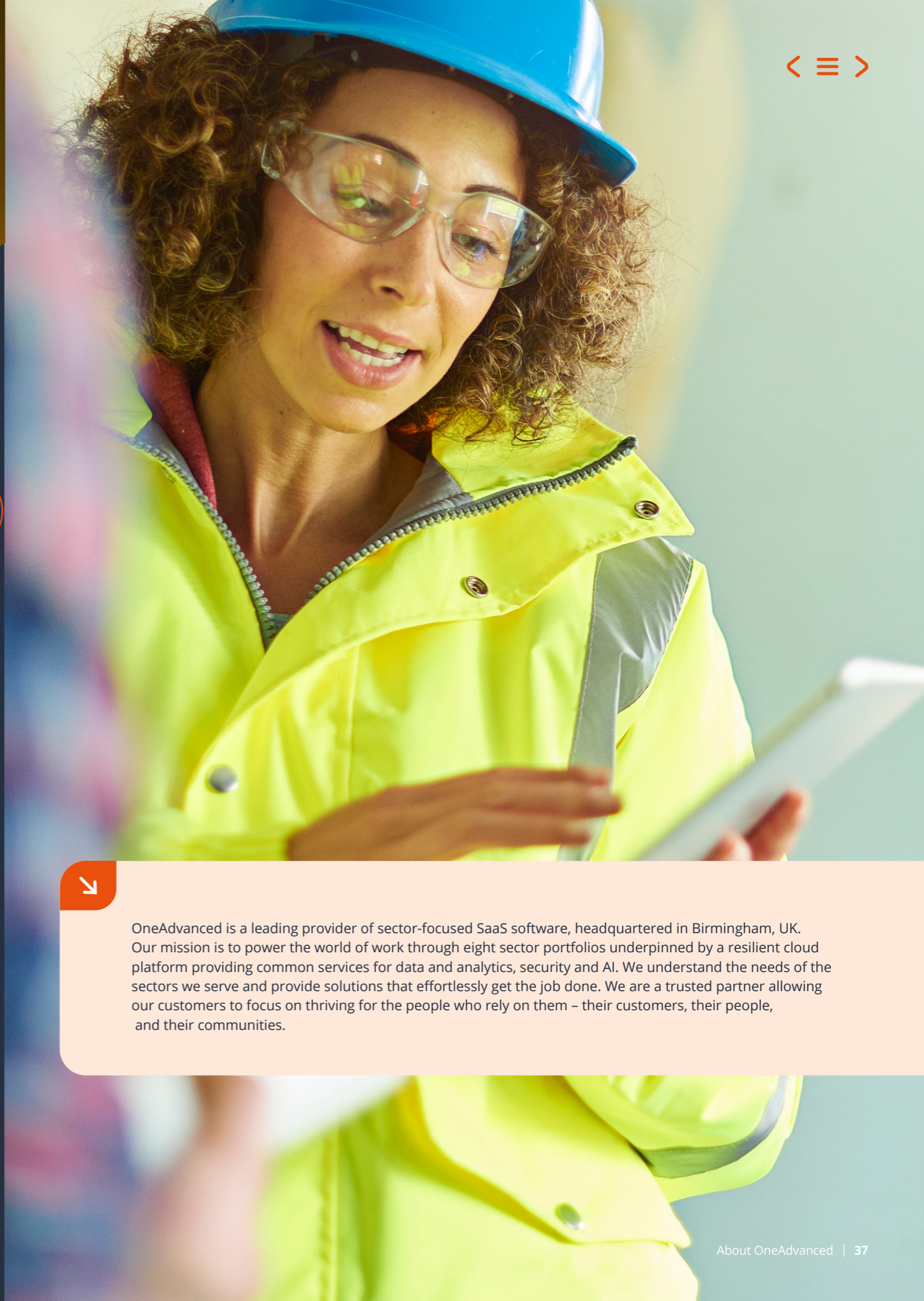
Joined up systems will also make life easier for procurement teams when creating the notices, contracts, and tenders required by the Procurement Act. In preparation for the new Act, just 37% say they are investing in new technology; teams will need to be sure their existing data is highly accurate, sharable across different systems, and easy to access.





ABOUT ONEADVANCED

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OneAdvanced is a leading provider of sector-focused SaaS software, headquartered in Birmingham, UK. Our mission is to power the world of work through eight sector portfolios underpinned by a resilient cloud platform providing common services for data and analytics, security and AI. We understand the needs of the sectors we serve and provide solutions that effortlessly get the job done. We are a trusted partner allowing our customers to focus on thriving for the people who rely on them – their customers, their people, and their communities.

Methodology

The research was carried out online by Research Without Barriers – RWB, on behalf of OneAdvanced, with all surveys conducted between 23rd August 2024 and 13th September 2024.

The sample comprised 6,005 UK senior decision makers (from organisations with 100+ employees). 3205 identified as male, 2779 as female, and 21 as other. Demographically respondents were grouped by age; 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+, located in all four of the UK nations.

All research conducted adheres to the UK Market Research Society (MRS) code of conduct (2023) .

Research Without Barriers (RWB) is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and is fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (2018).