



REAL PROPERTY UK CASE STUDY DARLINGTON, COUNTY DURHAM

Real Property UK own and manage more than 30 HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupancy) in the thriving town of Darlington, county Durham. Owner of the business Paul Million was very concerned about the amount of heat and therefore money that was being wasted in the Winter from his properties, often left all day with the heating on, the windows open and no one at home.

Paul needed something to keep his tenants happy and his bills down so he installed 28 Genius Hubs into all of the properties that could benefit from zoned heating control, taking advantage of the Genius Hub Smart heating system and occupancy detection to turn down the heating in rooms when they are not being used.

Rolling the system out was only done after a careful and thorough test of the system was completed. Paul installed the first Genius Hub one whole year before, and he installed it into the property occupied by Paul Stevens, head of maintenance. If there were going to be any problems with the system then Paul Stevens would be the one to decide whether or not this was a good product to roll out across the estate.

One year on and all of the properties now have Genius Hubs and management of the systems has been passed onto the owner's right hand lady; Carla. Here is Carla's account of the day to day management of the system.

How did you hear about Genius Hub?

Through an installer we had, he was really helpful and very knowledgeable about the system.

We also used him to install the system into the rest of the properties as part of the main roll out of the system. One of the engineers from Genius Hub's head office in Birmingham came to visit three to four of the properties with us to check that we were specifying the right kit and then it was down to us to fit it with their help on the phone if we needed it.

Why smart heating controls?

Saving money is important, and keeping the tenants happy of course. It is a competitive market and we want to provide value for money for our tenants.

We also know that managing the household bills is difficult for them, especially when they share the house with others who may only be there for a number of months. So we take care of the bills for them, but we also need to make sure that just because the household bills are now part of the rent that energy is not carelessly wasted, which can certainly happen.

We needed a smart zoned heating system that was easy for the tenants to use, so they can boost the heating in their individual rooms when they want it, but would also turn down the heat when they are not there and turn it off if they open a window. Genius Hub ticked all of those boxes.



Why did you choose Genius Hub?

It began with a recommendation by the heating engineer we use. But we weren't going to only take his word for it. In all the research we did, **Genius Hub kept on coming back on top, looking at the reviews and other landlords and plumbers that we spoke with, we could see that it was the Genius Hub that was specifically geared to HMOs.** The other systems we found were not geared to HMOs and were just basic domestic systems for peoples' homes and these would easily be tampered with by the tenants.

What were the main considerations before the purchase?

We knew Genius Hub worked in HMOs but what concerned was that there weren't enough case histories of other systems. That's why we decided to trial it for a year ourselves before rolling it out across all of our properties. We were also not sure how much equipment to get, and then how much work was required for the installation. **We were pleased to meet one of the Genius Hub engineers at one of the properties at this stage, as all of those questions were answered when we visited some of the properties with our heating engineer and the engineer from Genius Hub.**

Was there anything you were concerned about?

Sometimes you were Heat Genius sometimes Genius Hub. We didn't realise this was because you now control other things as well as heating so you dropped the 'Heat' part of your name. When we realised that, it all made more sense as we then found a lot more case studies and examples of people who had used this technology in their properties.

How did you design and buy the system?

We emailed some room lists over to the office (in Birmingham) and it was designed by Genius Hub. It was really easy. We then got back all of the designs and recommendations for the number of smart thermostats, and smart valves they suggested to go into each property, and once that was checked by our own maintenance man Paul we placed the order. **What made it even easier was Genius Hub offer interest free finance on the system so we only had to pay for a fraction of it up front the rest we pay for over two years. This made the decision a**

'no-brainer' as our general maintenance and improvement budget more than covered the down payment on the system, and the savings more than cover the repayment. Why would we not want to do it!

What were your first impressions of the Genius Hub?

We were very impressed. The first person I spoke to gave me a really good feeling; it was clearly a family company with big business mentality. This translated all the way through from the engineer who came to the properties to the technical customer support we get now 12 months after the rollout.

How was the installation?

Easy as pie! The tenants were really impressed, it was so quick and unobtrusive, in most cases the tenants didn't even know that we'd been in, our heating engineer was in and out so fast. This was in part thanks to how Genius Hub preconfigured all of the equipment in their warehouse before it was shipped to the property; so there was no messing around on site.

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The valves and room sensors were all clearly labeled on the boxes as to which rooms they went into and it was all pre-paired with the Genius Hub part that goes next to the internet router in the property. So all that we had to do is screw on the valves, stick on the sensors and wire in the bit for the boiler, it takes literally minutes!

What do you like about the system?

I love the fact that it has an app, so I don't have to go on my laptop, or even visit the property in some cases. I love how I can set it up and forget about it. After it was first installed there were a few comments from the tenants, as one would expect, but after a few weeks they had all forgotten about it. With the new tenants it is easier as there isn't a change. Generally everyone likes how it works.

What has been your experience of Genius Hub overall?

Pleasant, easy, everyone I spoke with was really nice, knowledgeable and helpful about the system. When I phoned the tech team and I spoke to a lovely lady, she was so helpful! It's great to have local customer support in the UK.

Conclusion

I don't know how Paul coped with it before, how he managed more than 30 properties without Genius Hub. I guess that he just had to deal with the fact that he was watching his money disappear out of the open windows in the Winter, with the heat blasting on and him paying for the gas bill. This is not a problem anymore though and the tenants couldn't be happier. I'd highly recommend this system to others in our position.

Have you benefitted in any other way?

Yes, we finally can tell when the tenants are using electric heaters and we can do something about it. Portable electric heaters are dangerous, expensive to run and are banned, now we can see on the app when they are being used, due to the sudden spike in temperature.

How do you use the system?

I use it daily on the app and occasionally on my laptop. It's so handy that I can see if there are any problems in any of the properties at a touch of a button.

How have you found using the app?

Really easy for the basics. There are loads of other settings in there which are also really helpful, I found these when the engineer showed me how to access and use them as well as when I phoned the technical customer support. It's easy to use given that I'm not that technical really.

Would you recommend the Genius Hub?

100% yes, it's brilliant and saves me so much time.

