

Urban&Civic's Appy Communities

With the UK population using an average of 11 mobile phone apps each day, information consumption trends suggest that you need to be in the palm or pocket of your audiences to get your messages across – and that is exactly what we are doing in U&C.

Through a web-based mobile phone application, we are now able to target information and communication direct to our residents through a community focussed mobile phone app, which is designed as a mobile website for everything related to life in our places.

Because it is web based, you don't need to download or login to the app – just pin it to your homepage and it performs like the other 29 apps (on average) that we have on our phones. Logging in and personal information are common barriers of usage for mobile phone apps and so we are seeing positive uptake within Houlton and Priors Hall Park, where the app has launched, and it is also acting as a helpful shop window into our communities for housebuilders when selling homes.

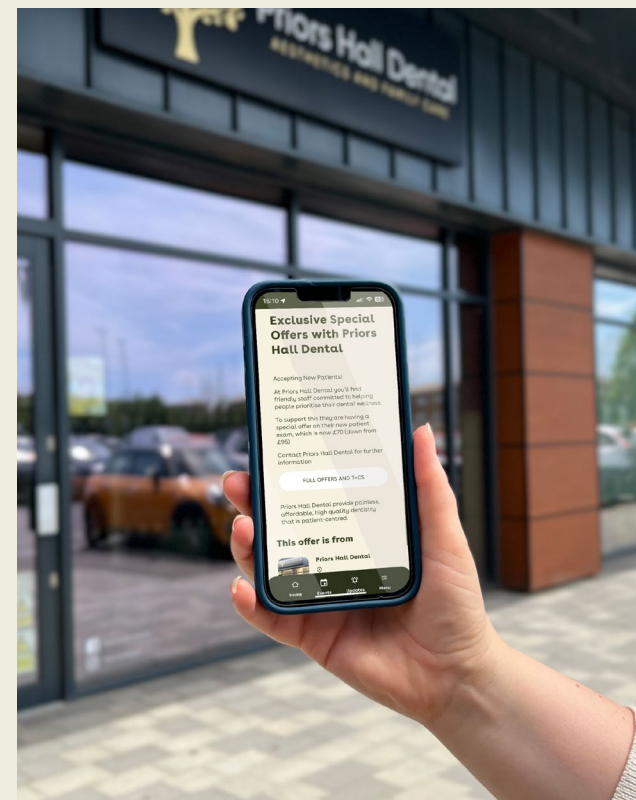
Much like a 'welcome pack' for residents, the app contains a directory of helpful information, contact details, opening times and further links for information. What's On sections highlight events and regular classes, hiring information and of course a news section to keep up to date with local information. The homepage makes navigation simple and quick and because it is digital we are able to glean helpful analytics on how our residents are using the tool.

Efficiently built with a universal content management system CMS which each of our sites use, the apps have been built to reskin with branding for each place – so the app looks unique for each community whilst benefitting from a common backend operating system. Likewise, the analytics are common so we can compare and contrast how the apps are performing across the portfolio.

Now a primary communications tool for our community development leads, channelling as much information through the apps as possible will ensure they growth in effectiveness and impact. Whilst on average, the UK population has some 29 apps installed or pinned on their homepages, it is therefore vital that we keep information fresh and people revisiting – not a new challenge for communications professionals. Early successes have included making the app THE main way to carry out the Easter Egg Hunts at Houlton and Priors Hall Park, booking tickets for community events and to access the regular offers and discounts that are changed regularly.

A secondary but really interesting benefit of the community apps is how helpful they are proving for housebuilders' sales teams who are able to show the app to interested buyers, pin it to their homepages and provide them with an insight into life in our places.

Usage data since the apps launched in April 2025 have been strong with expected and planned spikes around key releases of information and events. Despite being rolled out by different local teams, the app usage data for Houlton and PHP is remarkably similar which provides a good benchmark for the next site rollout at Wintringham by the end of the year.



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