Bouygues UK - collaborative working for improved efficiency, visibility and risk-management across supply chain applications for payment.

Operating in the UK for over 20 years and part of a global diversified services group, Bouygues UK designs and builds sustainable developments that enhance and transform communities, and is one of the largest contractors in the UK.

Specialising in the residential and education sectors, Bouygues UK run a large number of simultaneous construction projects, with values reaching up to £200m. With a large number of supply chain businesses to be paid across the sites, the team at Bouygues UK understand the need for accuracy and prompt payment.

Recognising the opportunity to innovate

Bouygues UK have a culture of knowledge-sharing, adopting best practices and embracing new ideas, the latest example of which has been their adoption of the digital processing of applications for payment and the issuing of payment notices.

Payment-related challenges are not uncommon in the construction industry, the majority of which are rooted in a lack of transparency, a fact that was not lost on the team at Bouygues UK.

Prior to digitising the supply chain application for payments process, this was managed in what is the traditional way for UK contracting; relying on emails and spreadsheets for receipt of applications and the issuing of payment notices, in order to ensure compliance with Construction Act timescales.

Laura Riseley, Quantity Surveyor for Bouygues UK, told us, "Before we used Payapps, the subcontractors would send emails over at the end of every month and usually it would be on their own templates. Some of them would use our template, but it would be a slightly amended version that we'd always have to tweak when it came in. So because of that, we'd get a lot of misinformation or doubling-up, or the subcontractor often would apply for things in two different places. So it just meant a lot more work for us at the end of the month."

Moving with the times, Bouygues UK felt that adopting a web-based solution could streamline the traditional process and as such onboarded Payapps across a number of their projects to transform their management of supply chain applications for payment.

Standardising the application for payment process - a single source of accessible truth

Payapps has provided a single, centralised solution for contractors to submit and receive applications in a consistent format.

Mark Nice, Commercial Manager, commented "Now we've got visibility of everything coming in. There's less chasing - probably none at all really - to get the subcontractors to submit their applications because Payapps does that for us. Everything's in a standard format which is much easier than trying to interpret various documents to assess and value the works."

Anne Smales, Deputy Commercial Director, followed this by saying, "Payapps gives us all the information in one place. If someone isn't available, another member of the team can easily access the single source of truth thereby giving us greater clarity and understanding.

"We can see at a glance when an application is received, when payment notices were issued, and there can be no question about those key dates. We also have the benefit of reminders being issued to our commercial staff to make sure payment notices are issued on time, which really helps to ensure compliance."

> "We can see at a glance when an application is received, when payment notices were issued, and there can be no question about those key dates. So it's very easy to check - there's a single source of truth."
>
> Anne Smales | Deputy Commercial Director, Bouyguess UK
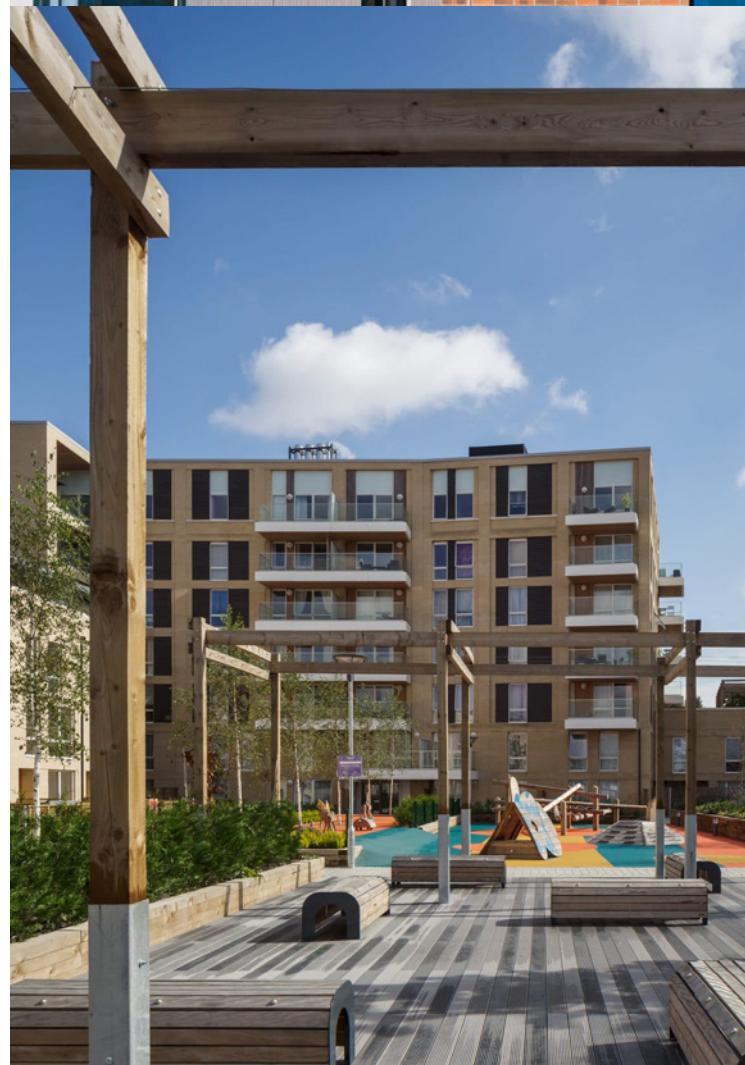
Improved visibility allows efficient working and time for other tasks

Fabrice Davis, also a Deputy Commercial Director, tell us what he particularly likes about Payapps: "I can go into the system, I can see every contract that we've set up in the system, any outstanding payments and where they're currently sitting in terms of the approval workflow. I can see who's holding up the process and I can discuss it in a timely manner with the right people, before any issues arise."

Beyond applications for payment, Bouygues also use Payapps for managing variations. Mobarak Ali, Graduate Quantity Surveyor, explains what this was like prior to using Payapps: "The subcontractor would include this additional work within the one invoice, and there would be no clear separation between what was and wasn't contractual. For the QS team, to then break that invoice down and work out if it was a variation or not, particularly if the subcontractor had not been clear, was a very time-consuming process. Payapps provides a solution to the problem, where variations are listed separately and any involved parties can add information and notes to the record, which makes it easier for the team to do their necessary checks."

Recommending Payapps for streamlining applications for payment

Two years on from adopting the solution, we were keen to understand whether Bouygues UK and members of their supply chain would recommend Payapps.

"It's a smarter, efficient way of working," enthused Gtek's Jim Howe. "Right now we're actually enjoying the fact that we can operate the system and check on payments on the move. So in the office, or working at home which we've being doing quite a lot during the pandemic, we can keep track of everything quite clearly."

He continued, "Efficiency is one thing, but that in turn aids cash flow. We can monitor and we can forecast, so we're more easily able to predict where we are on a financial basis. So in summary, yes, we would certainly recommend Payapps, in fact I think we ought to be using this ourselves as well with our own supply chain."

For Bouygues UK quantity surveyors, it's the efficiencies that really stand out: "Using Payapps means I can process a payment application really quickly," commented Mobarak, "Sometimes within a couple of minutes, which then frees my time up for other aspects of the role, whether that be progressing meetings, site visits or just replying to emails. It also eliminates the worry of missing applications or making mistakes, and at a glance you can check you have completed any actions pending which then allows you to get on with the rest of your tasks. It's the same for the subcontractor - with everything set up for them, they can create and upload everything within minutes, freeing up more of their time too."

From a management perspective, Fabrice said "Yes, I would definitely recommend Payapps to other contractors. We've found it really useful and I'm not seeing anything else at the moment that does the same job, or that offers a team that's so helpful. It's been a godsend and I think it will continue to be useful into the future."

Regarding the successful relationship with Payapps, Anne adds, "I can only see that going from strength to strength on future projects and with potential future developments. I'm sure our great working relationship will improve, and we'll continue to see the benefits."

"It makes payments easier. It simplifies everything and makes processes slicker for us as a business"

Fabrice Davis | Deputy Commercial Director, Bouygues UK
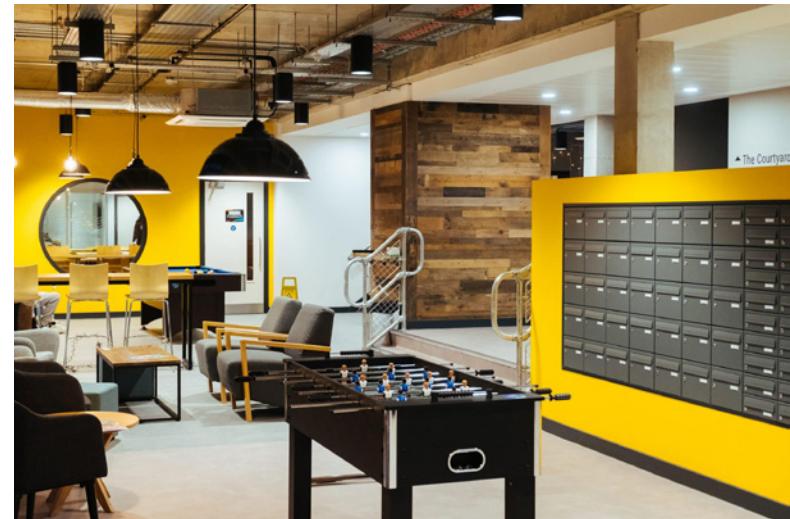
How can you get started?

Forward-thinking businesses like Bouygues UK use Payapps to improve operational efficiency.
See how it can work for you by booking a demo today.