Case Study: Norfolk County Council

Norfolk’s population is estimated at 877,700 in mid-2014 – an increase of around 6,700 on the previous year.

Over the decade, in terms of broad age groups, numbers of children and young people in the county (aged 0-17) rose marginally, numbers of working age adults (aged 18-64) increased by around 19,100, and numbers of older people (aged 65 and over) increased by around 39,200 (23.6%).

The estimates for mid-2014 confirm that Norfolk’s population has a much older age profile than England as a whole, with 23.4% of Norfolk’s population aged 65 and over, compared with 17.6% in England.

In NCC’s Budget Book for 2015-18, the Leader of the Council states:

“Our strategy could not be clearer – to drive out as much as we can in efficiencies, transforming how we do business so that our frontline services are protected.

We are looking at how we can do things smarter and make use of technology. Efficiencies across the organisation will save us some £19m in 2015-16.”

THE CHALLENGE

With national and local government organisations undoubtedly under the greatest pressure yet to deliver more with less, Norfolk County Council recognised the need to evaluate all aspects of its service delivery and sought to make improvements either by rationalising what it delivers, or perhaps more importantly, how it delivers.

In line with this, the council was aware that its policies, processes and handling of Absence Management related issues were in dire need of review, with its related business practices deemed to be inefficient and non-productive. Multiple historical policies led to confusion and inconsistencies in the way Absence was managed across the organisation. Absence data from across the council and its external Managed Service customers was being submitted to a central HR Shared Services team using paper returns. All occupational calculations were being performed off-system using a variety of methods. With no direct link to pay affecting calculations, Absence was being recorded inconsistently, severely hampering the council’s ability to analyse the true cost and extent of Absence trends and implement measures to address Absence hotspots.
e-Resolve was commissioned to undertake a detailed end-to-end review of Norfolk County Council’s Absence policies, processes and technological solutions.

In doing so, it made a number of recommendations focused on business process and existing restrictions within the current environment that impact either data quality or efficiency of service within the HR/Payroll arena. Those recommendations placed focus on the following areas:

- Policy rationalisation and standardisation
- Improving data quality and consistency
- Increasing efficiencies
- Improving quality and availability of Management Information
- Developing cultural and business process changes
- Ensuring responsibility and accountability for managing absence lies with the appropriate areas of the organisation
- Reducing implementation timescales for an automated absence solution

Consequently, in addition to those expected to be delivered through proper utilisation of Oracle’s Absence Management module, the review highlighted a number of areas where improvements could be made and benefits achieved, through testing existing business processes, their reason, rationale and impact and, where appropriate, challenging these with alternative ways of working.

Further, it investigated and compiled a comprehensive set of requirements for an automated system solution, from data capture through to payroll calculations, and the generation of pre and post payroll Management Information.

e-Resolve then produced a high level solution design in order to utilise Oracle HCM’s Absence Management functionality, based on those detailed requirements captured, demonstrating how the high level design mapped to the requirements using a traceability matrix.

Following a presentation of the findings, recommendations and high level design to the council’s HR Leadership Team, it was clear that in order to contribute to the efficiency challenges required of the Council, a programme of change would be necessary in order to achieve the desired results. As a direct result of the work e-Resolve undertook, efficiencies...
coupled with more accurate, meaningful and timely availability of data were achieved in the short term through the adoption of our recommendations, and a business case generated leading to the implementation of Oracle’s Absence Management functionality being added to the list of programmed works.

TESTIMONIAL

“Norfolk County Council has worked with e-Resolve on a range of projects involving business analysis, solution design, configuration and implementation support. Throughout these projects I have been delighted with the level of local government sector specific knowledge that e-Resolve brings to the table. I expect excellent technical, functional and project management skills, and these are present in spades, but the local government knowledge means that we get appropriate solutions delivered that work for us across both HR and Payroll. I have a high level of trust and confidence in the work done with and for us. As a result of working with e-Resolve we have solutions in place that are enabling us to more fully realise the benefits of Oracle functionality driving both efficiency and effectiveness gains – a key requirement in the current local government environment.”

Debbie Beck
HR Services Manager
Norfolk County Council