



Customer Success Story: Harrow Council

Overview

Harrow Council is one of 20 Outer London Councils situated to the northwest of the capital, with borders both to home counties, shire authorities and to other London Boroughs.

Challenge

Harrow's Physical Disability care management team (PDSS) forms part of the Social Services Department, and is responsible for providing specialist services to people within the Borough who have physical disabilities and / or sensory impairments. Residents within the Borough needing specialist care or services are referred to Social Services often by their GP or Health Visitor. Once this referral has been received, the first part of the process is to ascertain if that resident has been dealt with on previous occasions and if so by which team. Then they must evaluate which specific services the resident might need, and what level of priority the case requires. When this has been established most referrals are forwarded to the assessment team, who are responsible for undertaking a more detailed assessment of need.

For more complex needs a Social Worker visits the person concerned at home to assess if they have a requirement for specialist equipment or other care services (e.g. stair lifts, personal care, etc.), and completes a detailed assessment form. That assessment is then used to prepare the care plan for the client and from this the detailed packages of care are selected and costed. This information is then automatically entered into a review cycle, ensuring that reviews are carried out in a timely manner. Urgent reviews for changed circumstances are easily set up. As a result of the review new services can be added or old ones removed to suit the patient need.

This evaluation and routing of referrals and undertaking of a full assessment was often a lengthy process, and could

Highlights

Healthcare

Processes Enabled:

- Evaluation & Assessment Management
- Social Services Referrals Routing

Customer Benefits & Results:

- The ability to process referrals and assessments more quickly and effectively, without having to increase the workforce
- Reduced waiting times
- Enabled a foundation for a more sophisticated system

sometimes result in a long wait by the citizen for the care and services required. While fast turnaround may be vital in cases such as these, client confidentiality also must be taken into consideration and it is important that any system is able to deal with citizen data securely. Harrow Borough also need foundations in place for the introduction of the Single Assessment Process (SAP), the new Government requirement aimed at reducing possible duplication in relation to the assessments carried out by Social Services and by health care staff in the NHS. The process developed for PDSS is identical to the process for SAP for older people. Harrow is thus ideally placed to implement electronic SAP.

Solution

Harrow had a considerable backlog of people awaiting assessment; and had identified a need for a more effective system that would decrease the time taken to process referrals and assessments, reduce the number of errors, and enable the department to handle cases more efficiently. This was especially important given the introduction of new waiting-times standards from Central Government. It also needed a system that would be able to link the assessment data to the central client information system database, thus streamlining the process from beginning to end.

A new way of working was devised, which allowed for 'fast-tracking' the process for those people with less complex needs ('single service assessments'), a new Customer Support Team was set up to process these cases. Its role was also to route the more complex cases through to the specialist assessment team, thus making better use of the specialist skills of more highly

trained members of staff. This new way of working had to be implemented using the existing level of resources.

Metastorm BPM®, a Business Process Management solution, was selected as the best-fit technology solution to the problem and was implemented by InterWorking Ltd, a Metastorm strategic solutions partner with broad experience in the Public Sector and the NHS. Installed in June 2003 by the InterWorking team, the pilot system was up and running and staff were trained to use the system within a matter of months. The Customer Support Team at Harrow is now able to input information straight onto the system, with all the necessary checks taking place online. This has reduced both the time the process takes and the number of errors. The solution allows all information to be automatically written back to the central client database (Oracle), and is thus readily available to other users of that system within other parts of the Authority. The number of people waiting for non-urgent assessments was reduced dramatically - by up to 90 per cent.

Moreover, Metastorm BPM automatically maintains a full audit trail of all actions. That audit data is a valuable tool to monitor and manage the performance of the department and to support social workers should disputes arise in the future.

Results

Martyn Ellis, Head of Planning and Performance Management, Harrow Council Social Services commented, “The number of referrals and the somewhat disjointed process for dealing with them meant that we had built a considerable backlog for some kinds of work which was unacceptable. Our residents often had to wait too long for the care that they required. This was compounded by the fact that the team was under enormous pressure to keep up with demand but not working as efficiently as it could have. The new system means that we have been able to introduce a new way of working, and are now able to process referrals and assessments more quickly and effectively, without having to increase the workforce. The fact that the process can link with other systems is a huge benefit. We have been delighted by the results so far and I see many more applications within the Borough for which Metastorm could be very beneficial.”

Charles Goody, Director, InterWorking Ltd said, “Harrow Council is not alone in the issues it was facing. There are over 170 Social Services departments across the country and they are all under pressure to deliver a quality, timely service to their citizens. The nature of the work also means that each referral

needs to be handled on a case-by-case basis using the skills of the Social Workers to deliver the most appropriate solution. Metastorm BPM is ideally suited for this mode of working. Moreover the system we have developed for disabilities forms the core of most systems that are managing the process of assessment and delivery of citizen services. The return to Harrow on this initial investment is thus improved further. Apart from the efficiencies gained from the system, Harrow Council is able to concentrate on delivering more innovative and effective services to its residents safe in the knowledge that they are getting the service they deserve.”

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