

York Council switches from disparate systems to integrated bespoke Prescient+ software

One of City of York Council's key priorities is transforming service delivery, in partnership with local residents and businesses, for the benefit of the community.

Jane Milthorp, Practice Manager at City of York Council, explains how its "legal services, like all other public services, are operated on a co-operative model to ensure the best possible services at the best possible price."

York Council's legal team was using disparate systems for each stage of legal proceedings, resulting in intensive use of internal resources and discrepancies between systems. An efficient, methodical, consistent approach was needed to improve the speed and quality of service provision.

"We had an Access database for case management, a time recording system to log fee earning activity, basic Word for document production, standard email software for communications and Business Objects for business intelligence", comments Jane. "Everything was stored separately. They didn't talk to each other or link together in any way.

"There was lots of duplication which, in turn, led to discrepancies. For example, to work on a matter, we'd first have to locate the case reference number in Access, then go into the time recording system to start logging time and manually populate documents in Word. It was a clumsy way of working and it had to change."

York Council underwent a thorough procurement exercise for legal case management software.

"We reviewed several competitive systems", continues Jane. "Our criteria were cost, customisability, time recording and document bundling within one integrated system. We chose Prescient+ because the others didn't come close for flexibility."

Data conversion was successfully executed and Prescient+ was installed within the designated time-frame.

"The migration exercise itself presented significant challenges", adds Jane. "We had 10,000 records and 10 years' worth of time recording data attached to cases, stored in separate systems. A huge amount of data. Civica transferred it all across so this historical client information is readily available for viewing within Prescient+. It's brilliant having everything saved against each case record."

Prescient+ is designed to support legal departments in achieving and demonstrating maximum value and first-class practice, with a modular format allowing local authorities to choose the appropriate modules for their team, fitting together seamlessly within the one application.

"With the single integrated electronic platform of Prescient+, we perform our entire case management and statistical reporting tasks from a central web-based desktop", says Jane. "This saves a considerable amount of time and duplicated effort, as it's introduced elements of automation, which is such a contrast from our previous duplicated processes. With the bundling module too, we can put together high-quality documents and court bundles comprising any combination of file formats, instantly. The bundling feature alone has made dramatic differences to how we work."

Prescient+ can be customised on many levels, individual or team, from home screen layout to unique database fields and letter templates.

"Because Prescient+ is so customisable, anyone with good IT skills can stretch it", states Jane. "With a concerted effort, you can really put your own stamp on it. Being completely adaptable, it is what you make it. The more you put in, the more you get out. Our willingness to invest time customising Prescient+ means it's bespoke to us.

"Also, security's good as access to certain areas, such as child care, can be locked down to specific users. And Civica's helpdesk always makes efforts to assist with technical queries.

"Overall, we've personalised the software to such an extent that it helps us to work exactly as we choose. It's enabled a move to custom-built smaller offices because we need substantially less paper storage capacity and we've introduced home working through remote log-in. Prescient+ is a clever, fast, efficient system."

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Practice Manager
City of York Council