

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

The Client:

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is home to over 150,000 residents. For three years running, the council has been rated Excellent by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, a test which determines how well a council is run.

The council has achieved this in part by taking care of its employees. It does this through extensive training and development, competitive salaries and attractive benefits including flexible-working and free travel.

Sector:

Local authority.

Challenge:

To transform the council's personnel services, moving away from time-consuming 'manual' processes towards more efficient IT-based systems, saving the council £250,000 over three years.

Solution

NorthgateArinso's ResourceLink was chosen to meet the council's immediate personnel and payroll needs for its 6,500 employees and pensioners. But they knew when selecting a solution that they wanted to achieve much more. They therefore worked with NorthgateArinso to take advantage of a number of options to meet an ambitious vision.

The council wanted to take advantage of the way that ResourceLink can be used to underpin an organisation's infrastructure as the central database that drives other critical systems. It does this by holding data that the other systems draw on when needed. ResourceLink has therefore become critical to meeting the council's strategic objectives.

Benefits

- Simplified sickness recording processes moving from paper form-filling to online updates, and improvements in absence profiling capability.
- Recruitment processes that are automated to reduce administration time.
- Self service HR functions that empower employees to update their personnel information and that free HR staff for other, more valuable tasks.
- Moving from paper-based processes to online systems means that procedures are swifter, easier and virtually foolproof.

- Flexible and user-friendly reporting tools give managers the opportunity to produce reports on a wide range of subjects, from absence trends to vacancies and staff turnover.
- Tedious re-keying of data already stored on the computer is a thing of the past.
- Mountains of paper have been shredded and valuable floor space previously used for filing has been put to better use

Background

The transformation of the council's personnel services began in 2003 when Director of Personnel and General Services George Bishop made what could have been seen as a rash promise. He told colleagues and councillors that if they let him take what was then essentially a devolved personnel function back in to the centre and run it as a corporate service, he would save the council £250,000 over three years.

The vision was to move away from time-consuming, 'manual', paper processes towards more efficient, user-friendly IT-based systems that harnessed the benefits of modern technology.



"What our customer said"

"The system has halved our response handling team's workload as we no longer need to input application form data. It goes straight into ResourceLink, so all our recruitment monitoring information - including equal opportunities data"

Recruitment Manager
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Solution

The adoption of ResourceLink has helped the council meet its vision by delivering a number of time and money saving benefits, including the following:

Online sickness recording

The previous manual process for recording sickness saw managers take blank forms at the end of each month, fill in the names of their staff, write the dates they had been sick and then send the forms to personnel. But all too often, the personnel staff saw that a large number of forms were outstanding each month.

"We would have to chase and chase, and often people would eventually tell us that they hadn't sent the return back because no-one had been sick – as if we should have guessed," says Stephen Wood, head of a strategic development group formed to manage the implementation of new personnel systems. "Even when the completed forms were finally returned from all 400 sections, the details had to be entered onto the payroll system by the personnel team."

With ResourceLink, managers are now sent an email prompt towards the end of the month and they go online to fill in a simple form. Staff names and other data are already on the system, so there is no tedious inputting. The software eliminates silly mistakes, and totalling such things as 'sickness to date' is done automatically. Non-return of sickness details is now a thing of the past.

Automated recruitment

Recruitment has been largely automated, beginning with the online completion and submission of application forms that then drop neatly into ResourceLink.

Online ability and personality testing further smoothes the recruitment process, and means that people don't have to visit the council offices just to be tested.

Recruitment Manager Keeley Cooper is delighted with the results: "The system has halved our response handling team's workload as we no longer need to input application form data. It goes straight into ResourceLink, so all our recruitment monitoring information - including equal opportunities data - is recorded automatically and accurately."

Minimal re-keying

Most of us are well used to the tedious keying in of name, email address, date of birth etc. when attempting to sign up for, say, a training course. At Kensington and Chelsea that simply isn't necessary, as the system automatically knows all those details once the employee has logged on.

Reducing manual storage

Local authorities typically devote huge areas of expensive floor space to storing personnel records. "We used to have 3,200 files in our file room; that's half a million pages of A4," explains Stephen Wood. And once a file is lost, it usually stays lost. Such storage is not just costly but also makes accessing even the simplest staff detail a chore for managers.

A trial was carried out where all files relating to IT department staff were scanned and placed online under a folder structure containing five sections such as recruitment and attendance. The trial worked so well that the rest of the council's personnel records are being dealt with in the same way. In fact, the process of sorting the files before scanning is allowing the council to destroy 25% of documents because many are duplicated or no longer important.

Online personnel records

Through a link from ResourceLink to a third party system, employee records are stored online, secure and instantly accessible to the right people. New members of staff have their details put straight on to the system and will never have a physical 'file', while managers can save new documents to the system rather than keeping a paper copy. Information from each file can also be accessed, updated and emailed to colleagues if necessary.

The intranet is also populated with information from ResourceLink, which again means that once someone has logged in with their personal identifier the system knows who they are. Head of IT David Tidey reports: "The council has made a reality of the IT vision of entering data once and then letting the computer do the work. It has made us a showcase for IT in the field of personnel – and made life much easier for managers at the same time."

Bringing useful information to employees

As well as personnel files, the intranet also contains 'family trees' of council departments that are kept up-to-date by ResourceLink. Once information is changed in one area it automatically changes itself throughout the system, including the family tree.

The intranet also contains step-by-step guides to procedures such as recruitment, managing absence, grievances and disciplinary problems, giving managers online help and a flowchart type guide to doing things properly. Web-based learning and development is also made as simple as possible, with the advantage that the intranet permanently records what people have done and when they did it.



"What our customer said"

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Head of Strategic Development
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

High levels of security

With security clearly a major issue, NorthgateArinso ensured that the data now held on the server is fully encrypted and only viewable through the ResourceLink system using content management software. A 'post-to-post' reporting system means that managers can only access the files of those members of staff who report directly to them.

Enabling home-working

The online personnel files allow managers to access information from home instead of having to be on site to wade through paper files. Working from home is something the council is keen to support in the right circumstances, and is certainly popular with those 400 full and part-time staff who take advantage of the technology in this way.

One of the advantages of home-working capability is that valued staff can stay with the council, even if they move away from the area. Staff can now work from home, signing on and off by email each morning and afternoon so that colleagues know when they can be contacted and when they are off duty. Through regular conference calls with the rest of the team and access to information via ResourceLink and the council's intranet, home-working staff are every bit as informed and productive as their office-based colleagues.

Conclusion

ResourceLink has been very well received by the personnel staff whose former role was often as holders of forms and paper. "They are much happier," explains Stephen Wood. "The personnel team is still on hand to deal with staff who have particular problems or needs, but they no longer get involved in dishing out forms. They are also able to develop new systems and tackle more interesting and challenging areas of work, such as helping to work towards adopting the government's national e-HR standards for local authorities."

For more information

With the skills, experience and market knowledge of NorthgateArinso behind you, you too can be well placed to translate the HR challenges your organisation is facing into powerful opportunities.

For an initial discussion about your requirements, call us on 0800 035 0545.
Email: hrsolutions@northgearinso.com
or visit www.northgearinso.com/uk.

