

# ACloserLook



## Significant savings in Social Care @ Cheshire West & Chester

### Overview

Located in the North West of England, Cheshire West & Chester Council has a population of 329,500 and covers 350 square miles. The Council began investigating procurement of new social care systems in 2009. In 2010 it was served with an Ofsted Improvement notice for Children's Services.

Safeguarding was deemed inadequate by Ofsted and Cheshire West & Chester felt this was hindered by their legacy social care systems, of which there were four. The Council concluded that poor data quality and integrity, governance issues and the difficulty experienced when training users or transferring knowledge had a significant effect on performance across both adults' and children's services.

### The Selection Process

The Council made the decision to tender for replacement systems in 2009.

Speaking about the tender selection process Jon Goldie, Team Manager - Electronic Social Care Records Systems explains, "This process enabled the Council to get a clear, unbiased and detailed understanding of the current social care systems on the market. As a result of this exercise, Liquidlogic was selected to provide IT systems for both adults' and children's social care."

## Implementation

The Council had an ambitious implementation plan to replace all children's, adults' and finance modules within 9 months for over 1,100 users. There were a number of key factors which would contribute to the achievement of this milestone including collaboration across all directorates, achieving buy in from all levels and rewriting the entire business practice, abandoning outdated and change-averse procedures.

At the core of Cheshire West & Chester's innovation was the decision to appoint a Social Work Manager with operational experience to lead all the business processes in the project. This autonomous role provided sufficient scope and freedom to make the radical and bold changes needed to ensure success.

## Identifying Savings

Since go-live in 2011, Cheshire West & Chester Council has made a number of quantifiable savings both financially and in terms of time.

**Jon Goldie comments**, "As part of our implementation we chose the improbable, but highly effective route of manually entering most of the information from our old system into the new finance engine. This gave us the opportunity to review and check that we were providing the right services at the right cost and on time."

Some of the savings included:

- An increased collection rate from 86% to 93% in adults' services
- An immediate reduction in budget of £150K via the Provider Portal (18% of budget)
- Competitive re-tender of the home care contract has saved approximately £1m per year. This has only been possible because the case management and contracts management are now seamless
- £70,000 of overpayments were immediately identified
- Social Worker administration time reduced by 46%
- 15% saved in finance processing resource
- Payment processing now takes a number of hours not days



## Achievements

Since implementing the new systems, a unified oversight of social care activity is readily available as are transparencies in the adults' assessment processes that have never previously been accessible.

In terms of addressing the issues raised by Ofsted in 2010, the Local Government Association commented, "a social care IT electronic recording system which supports practice developments and is more user friendly has been implemented by staff with previous social care experience."

As a direct result of the new system, social workers now spend substantially less time sitting at a computer and more time working with service users.

Crucially, at Ofsted's recent inspection of the Council it found major improvements across the board and has deemed Children's Services 'adequate'. This is something which the Council wants to build on. **Jon Goldie concludes**, "A great deal of work has gone into improving Children's Services at Cheshire West & Chester Council. The new system has provided an accurate, granular view of cases, workload, budgets as well as cost savings for the Council. I have no doubt that had we not replaced our legacy systems with Liquidlogic's we would not have been

in the position we are today. For adults' services our development of a fully integrated approach to care and financial management, with one system that seamlessly serves both directorates and corporately, a system that interfaces with the Council's central database system, Oracle R12, has enabled a single view of all financial matters across the Council."

**Strategic Director of the Cheshire West and Chester Young People's Service, Gerald Meehan comments**, "The implementation of Liquidlogic's system was tailored entirely to our workforce, by rolling out its functionality in a way that inspired confidence in our staff without overwhelming them with technology. ICT staff walked the floor over a period of time to give hands on advice and guidance to staff, and to help in dealing with any glitches. This had a marked impact on the efficiency of the implementation, and keeping the business going at a time of intense scrutiny of our child protection services. For me, it was a model of how you introduce a highly complex change programme and one that actually improved the service as experienced by our clients."

## The Future

The Council has a number of initiatives for the future. The joined up working it has experienced with Partner agencies over the past twelve months is a significant step forward, however the Council recognises there are many other ways in which integration with health and other agencies could be improved.

### Cheshire West & Chester's Top Tips:

- Choose the right team with an unfailing drive to do things differently if necessary
- When looking at new suppliers, investigate less obvious aspects of them, for example financial stability going forwards
- Always allow more time for data migration and don't discount manual transition if it means accuracy
- Strike up a great working relationship with suppliers, they can be a valuable part of your team
- Choose a system which offers flexibility and responsiveness both to new business requirements and refinements suggested by users of the system
- Embed the input from users in order to maximise the efficiency of the system