

The benefits of ISO/IEC 20000 and ITIL® at Stockport Council

“Stockport Council’s ICT department wanted to demonstrate high quality services.”

Andy Kirkham, Head of ICT



Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Stockport Council is the local authority for the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport, part of Greater Manchester, England, UK. The ICT department has over 3,500 Stockport Council customers, delivering services to a population of nearly 300,000. All of the services delivered by the Council rely on technology to a greater or lesser degree and services provided by the ICT department range from; email, HR, and Financial Systems to complex case management systems for social care staff.

The challenge

Stockport Council faces many challenges. The UK government has adopted a policy of giving local authorities more control over how they spend public money. At the same time, vital European Union funds are being taken away from English councils and their business partners in a blow to local growth projects. Understanding community and council priorities, driving through efficiency and effectiveness are all essential to Stockport Council. As part of this challenge, the ICT department has to play a key role in delivering value. The biggest challenge was to convert a reactive, fire fighting department which received many complaints, into an integrated, effective, efficient and proactive unit.

The solution

The ICT department’s journey towards recognised quality frameworks and standards started in 2002 with the adoption of ITIL. A newly appointment head of service brought with him significant experience of ITIL and in 2007 he personally began and led the journey which eventually culminated in ISO/IEC 20000 certification, the international standard for IT service management.

The first major step after starting the implementation project was a comprehensive gap analysis which identified the areas which didn’t meet the requirements of the standard and which informed the project planning and resource allocation.

Speed and quality were essential for the implementation, so instead of a slower and incremental approach, all services and locations were included in the service management system from the start of the project. All ICT personnel were involved, and all customers were incorporated within the scope of the ISO/IEC 20000 project.

Following an independent audit by a registered certified body Stockport Council’s ICT department was certified in April 2010. Andrew Kirkham Head of ICT says, “I was absolutely delighted when ICT gained ISO/IEC 20000 certification. This was excellent news for the Council as a whole and especially for the staff in ICT who had worked hard for a number of years to vastly improve the quality of the services we deliver”. ICT personnel have all been trained in best practices and now have a flexible approach, working closely with each other. The services, targets and priorities are all focused by Stockport’s business needs in the context of diminishing resources, staff efficiencies and providing better value for money.

The Benefits

The cost of delivering the ICT service has reduced by over £0.75m (15%) since gaining ISO/IEC 20000 certification. Additionally there have been marked qualitative improvements (the figures below are a comparison between 2009 and 2012) impacting positively on service delivery;

- The percentage of incidents resolved within agreed fix times has increased from 92% to 97%.
- The number of Emergency Changes over a twelve month period has halved.
- The number of Security Incidents in a year has reduced by over a third.
- The percentage of all calls breaching SLA’s has fallen from 15% to 6%.
- The number of complaints in a year has tumbled by almost 80% and the issues that are being raised are manageable and relatively minor, as opposed to being more fundamental.
- Customer satisfaction has improved and the number of low satisfaction scores has reduced by 65%.
- The volume of Changes in a year has reduced by 18%.

Perhaps one of the more telling statistics is the reduction in the number of Incidents recorded in a year. These have fallen by over 15% since certification and the trend continues. This reduction is a direct reflection of the benefits that the structure and consistent approach the ISO/IEC 20000 standard has brought to the organisation, and the pro-active work that we're now able to do to address issues before they become areas of concern for our customers.

ICT personnel contribute actively to service and process improvement, often taking the initiative by identifying better ways of working themselves. "Continual service improvement should be a driver for any successful and forward looking organisation", Derrick Taylor, Stockport Council ICT Change Manager, said.

Advice to other organizations

One of the early pitfalls was attempting to continue using an existing service desk tool which was only really suitable for basic incident and change management. To achieve the aspiration of ISO/IEC 20000 certification Stockport Council ICT needed to procure and install a true service management tool which supported the new integrated approach to delivering services.

"Make sure you have the right tools to support your processes and understand the scope and objectives of your new Service Management System before you start."

Derrick Taylor, ICT Change Manager

Although a phased approach is often recommended, serious consideration should also be given to Stockport's 'big bang' approach (i.e. all services, all locations, and all customers). An incremental approach, adopting a few processes or services at a time, will be slower and more expensive, but lower risk. It was hard work ensuring that all services were included in the certification on day one, but Stockport was able to make bigger improvements at a faster rate and they are convinced that it was the right approach for them.

More information

Contact: Derrick Taylor.
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, Town Hall,
Edward Street, Stockport, SK1 3XE,
derrick.taylor@stockport.gov.uk



 **APMG-International**
Accrediting Professionals

APMG International
Head Office: Sword House, Totteridge Road, High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire, HP13 6DG, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 1494 452 450
Fax: +44 (0) 1494 531 952
Email: servicedesk@apmg-international.com
Web: www.apmg-international.com

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