



# THE IN-HOUSE LEGAL OFFICE OF THE FUTURE

---

Public Sector Lawyers Network

Tuesday 22nd January 2013



# Modern Support Systems for Lawyers

The Warrington Journey

# Context

- Non Metropolitan Unitary authority
- In between Merseyside and Manchester
- Population around 200,000
- Total of 22 fte legal staff.
- Legal budget of £950,000.

# Why start the journey?

- Not all about cost and budget savings.
- Traditional 'Admin' team of 3 and 6 typists – unable to meet 'bottomless' demand.
- 'Us and Them' culture – complaints and inappropriate behaviours.
- Personal potentials not being realised.
- AND, budget savings required from 2008.

# Where did we want to get to?

- Culture change in attitude and behaviours.
- Mutual respect and team working.
- Opportunity for personal development.
- Efficient ways of working done at the right level and grade in the organisation.
- Full use of case management and other IT opportunities.

# What have we used on the journey?

- Case management workflows for admin and transactional activities.
- Cultural change away from traditional view of 'admin' .
- 'Lean techniques' to analyse ways of working.
- Restructured to remove team silo' s.
- Digital dictation.
- On line library resources.
- IT support for remote working.

# Focus on one element -

- Use of the 'lean' methodology
- And, its practical application.

# Use of 'lean techniques'

- Part of a corporate initiative facilitated by colleagues within the council.
- Used the techniques to look at support systems and ways of working:-
  - are transactional processes at the right level?
  - process of instructing external lawyers
  - dealing with invoices
  - archiving procedures.



# Lean – doing work at the right level (1)

- Three workshop sessions with the team to identify transactional processes and who did them and why?
  - Traffic orders, planning obligation agreements, commercial lettings, sewer adoption agreements, opening a file, completion of a lease.
  - 130 activities broken down by hours spent and grade of staff.

## Lean – doing work at right level (2)

- Identified 1500 hours of work that could be done by staff at a ‘support’ level or on lower grades.
- Excellent engagement and cross team working demonstrated by those involved.
- Benefits seen by all but how to implement and obtain more ‘support’ resources at time of reducing budget?

# Lean – Implementation (1)

- Typists are now Business Support Assistants
  - Flexible, wide range of tasks.
- Previous ‘admin’ staff are Support Officers
  - Effectively ‘para-legals’.
- Many transactional processes were transferred to Support Officers
  - freeing up qualified staff to do ‘added value’ legal work.

## Lean – Implementation (2)

- Qualified lawyers do small ‘admin’ tasks themselves to free up the support staff
  - Opening files, small photocopying, some typing.
- Case management workflows used to:
  - ease the burden of ‘admin’ tasks
  - assist with transactional processes.

# Where are we on the journey?

- One team culture – improved behaviours.
- Support team undertakes transactional work.
- Personal development opportunities for the support team staff.
- Increased capacity and job satisfaction.
- And, £44k saving from Support team restructure.

# Where are we heading?

- Investment in a new case management system and ‘Voice Recognition’ .
- New workflows using ‘lean’ techniques.
- Improvement to the office environment and possible desk sharing.
- Greater focus on where we ‘add value’ for the organisation.

# Questions