

Serving an area covering half of Wales and a population of nearly half a million, Dyfed Powys Constabulary is a busy police force with a reputation for exceptional service provision. Recently published Home Office statistics show that the force has the lowest crime rate and the highest detection rate of any force in England and Wales. For the force's Legal Services Team, such diligent policing over such a large geographical area generates a high range and volume of legal work, as the Head of Legal Services explains:

“We have between 80 and 100 new cases coming in every month, which are of a wide variety of types from civil claims, to firearms appeals, to employment matters. The challenge is to respond in a timely manner in spite of our heavy workload, whilst still meeting our primary objective of providing a best value service.”

To combat these challenges, in 2009 the legal team began to investigate technology solutions that would help reduce the time spent on administrative activities and streamline working practices, thereby freeing up valuable resource. After reviewing three potential solutions in detail, the team selected Iken Case Management and Time Recording software.

“As soon as we had an Iken demonstration, we saw that it was exactly what we wanted it was quite clear that it would be a fantastic system for us. also had really good reviews from other forces, which gave us confidence in the solution.”

The benefits highlighted by the Head of Legal since Iken was implemented include:

“Iken stores everything in one place it's a real time saver”

Before implementing Iken, the legal team had an electronic filing system that, whilst well organised, was time consuming and labour intensive to use.

“Every time the team received a piece of correspondence, its details had to be added to two separate spreadsheets before it was first scanned in, then moved to the correct file. Retrieving a document was similarly complicated because you would need to cross reference several different spreadsheets in order to find it again! But with Iken we can create complete, easily searchable electronic case files where any type of document can be stored, so we can get what we need in moments it's so much more efficient.”

“It's much easier to cover for staff absence”

In the past, responding to queries and case developments in a timely manner when members of the team were absent could be a challenge. But when a solicitor left the force earlier this year, Iken was instrumental in allowing colleagues to pick up his case load.

“We were already a lean department in terms of staffing, so the loss of a solicitor put us under real pressure. Iken provided key assistance: if someone rang in with a query on one of his cases, we could research the case history at the click of a button, and be reading the same document as the client in the space of seconds. This really helped with continuity of service.”

“We can demonstrate best value with management reporting”

Iken comes complete with a suite of detailed Police management reports, that have allowed the team to demonstrate the value they offer.

“The department has historically had difficulties demonstrating exactly what is involved in fulfilling each request for legal work. With Iken management reporting, we’ve been able to show how much work we actually complete for the different divisions and departments, how long it’s taken and the tasks involved. It’s really helped us show best value.”

“Iken will help secure our future in the face of financial cuts”

In the wake of a general election, Dyfed Powys Police saw its Home Office grant cut by £900,000 during one financial year. Such a substantial drop in budget necessitated large scale reorganisation within the force, and placed added pressure on departments to justify their continued operation.

“In the coming months, a large proportion of our time will be devoted to assisting the force in making the changes necessary to accommodate the cuts, and this is where Iken’s management reporting will really come into its own.

We’ll be able to clearly show the amount of time we’ve spent in meetings and on research and giving advice, and indicate the total proportion of time spent on helping the force in this area whilst still carrying out routine work.”

More importantly, with Iken we can demonstrate how much it’s cost to have an internal legal team carry out this work as opposed to using an external firm you can’t argue with value for money when you see that our costs are £37 an hour compared with about £250 for an external solicitor. This type of cost analysis really does help to secure our future.”

“I would recommend Iken without hesitation. Iken’s a fantastic system we’re less bureaucratic, more effective and it’s achieved everything we wanted and more.”

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