



Case Study: **Children & Adult Legal Services**

How Cornwall County Council is staying on top of childcare caseloads with integrated solutions from Iken Business

The Cornwall Legal Services team provides comprehensive legal advice and representation for all front line Council Services, from major commercial projects to planning requests, highways issues, trading standards enquiries and complex contractual issues. In addition, a twenty strong group of lawyers in the Children and Adults team is responsible for working with children and young people, families, school issues, employment disputes and child protection matters.

Like most legal teams dealing with childcare and family law, the Cornwall Children and Adult team work reactively. Caseloads may vary enormously, but the need for fast and efficient processing leading to an early conclusion of proceedings is a consistent requirement. For this case study we spoke to Stuart Cohen, the Legal Officer in the Children and Adults Legal Team project managing the Cornwall Legal IT solution.

"In childcare cases in particular, speed is of the essence. The legal team needs to react quickly to deliver structured, evidence-rich documents in the first instance to progress the case quickly through court and minimise the impact on the child and families involved."

In 2006 Cornwall Legal Services embarked on a project to procure software that would aid and assist all legal staff in their day to day duties. Part of a Beacon Council, the legal team wanted to ensure that the software would help them to play their part in supporting the Authority through continuous service level improvement and by demonstrating best value to the people of Cornwall.

The Iken Solution

Following a rigorous tender process, the **Iken Case Management System** with automated **Time Recording** was chosen and implemented in 2007. The leading public sector case management solution, Iken products are currently in use in over 60 authorities in the UK and have been specifically designed to meet the needs of public sector legal departments.

In addition to the Case Management System, further Iken solutions were implemented to provide extra support to the Children and Adults Legal Team:

- **Childcare Workflow** - automating and structuring the steps involved in various childcare proceedings and delivering additional levels of confidentiality and sensitivity
- **Court Bundling** - designed to take the manual work, stress and hassle out of producing evidential court documents for lawyers and their support staff

The result: greater efficiency, flexibility, and savings of over £3,000 per quarter in paper and storage alone!

The integrated use of technology has made a significant difference to the Cornwall Legal Team, with electronic communication with both internal and external parties becoming the norm.



Stuart Cohen describes the additional advantages of using the Iken childcare solutions as follows;

"Information is always at hand, it's now easier for team members to react to an urgent situation"

"One advantage of the increased use of technology is that the information is more accessible - you're not sitting by a fax machine, and there are no more 'oh no, I've missed the last post' situations. The important document you're waiting for can simply be emailed"

Iken stores documents, letters and emails in one place only, so that all the information concerning a case is available to appropriate professionals and managers collaborating on that work.

"Information is extremely valuable in helping us to react quickly. For example, when responding to an emergency protection order, with Iken we can see the archived case history straight away, and we've got immediate access to it"

With flexible working practices on the increase, members of the Cornwall Children and Adults Legal Team are also able to easily access and work within Iken from home.

"Iken helps you to be more organised and consequently to reduce risk"

All documents and emails held in Iken are indexed by multiple criteria at the point of production, allowing users to drill down and quickly find a document related to a specific case, child or contact.

"I can just go straight into the case file and the document or email I'm looking for has been automatically filed right there. With Iken, I can also easily look for links between cases, helping with risk assessment and conflict checks"

The Childcare Workflow guides users through a set of structured processes, at the same time creating a historical record of the steps taken. Meetings and other important events are automatically scheduled and reminders or alerts are issued appropriately to the fee-earner or their manager, ensuring that key dates are not missed. The collaborative nature of the Iken System also aids the team at Cornwall to deliver a joined up approach to client care:

"It's much easier to pick up work where it's been left off if a member of staff is sick or unavailable"

"Electronic Court Bundles have resulted in savings of over £3,000 per quarter"

The team at Cornwall are also discovering the benefits of using Iken's Court Bundling Software, which automates the indexing, sectioning and pagination of bundles to support child protection and other litigation.

"Both Courts and Solicitors are now proactively using IT. The Truro Court Circuit Judge is happy to accept Court Bundles on disk. This has resulted in some significant savings in paper and postage."

Additional savings have been made from the reduction in offsite archiving of paper-based bundles, eliminating the cost of the archive box, annual storage and filing or retrieval fees. These bundles are now held electronically with appropriate levels of data protection and security.

"It's also more secure to distribute bundles on numbered disks with passwords rather than sending sensitive paper-based documents by DX"

"Iken has changed the way we work, made us more accountable, more efficient"

Iken comes with many reports that are accessed through Word or by using Excel reporting facilities that aid the Cornwall Legal Team in sharing data and information with other departments.

"Once you're used to Iken, you find it hard to see how you'd work without it"

Cornwall Legal Service's commitment to professionalism and continuous improvement is demonstrated by the recent attainment of LEXCEL awards. With the forthcoming introduction of 'One Cornwall' in April 2009, (the unification of District, Borough and County Councils), the team remains committed to delivering best value service supported by the appropriate use of technology.

For more information on Iken solutions for Childcare Lawyers, visit our website:www.iken.biz/childcare or call us on:0845 450 9201 (0117 373 0790)