



Case Study: Legal Services at Devon & Cornwall Constabulary

How the provision of timely, high quality legal advice is being supported by Iken Case Management

The portfolio of work carried out by Legal Services teams in Police Constabularies across the UK has grown considerably over the last three or four years. Responsibilities range from applications for civil orders in the Magistrates' Court to issues affecting the broader organisation, including employment law, coroners' inquests, police misconduct, licensing and a myriad of other legal issues. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that managing and balancing workload has become a priority for these teams.

"Having acted as a Force Solicitor with Devon & Cornwall since 1996, I can confirm that the amount of legal services work has increased dramatically in recent years," states Mike Stamp, Director of Legal Services. "It is essential that at the heart of the governance of the organisation, is timely and high quality legal advice...My vision for the office is to develop and implement a legal services model that intervenes in issues at an earlier stage to prevent problems before they occur."

A number of potential IT solutions were investigated that would support the increased workload and enhance the efficiency and professionalism of the Legal Services team. After researching various types of systems, from claims management to document management, the team determined that a Case Management system was the most appropriate way forward. Ben Watts, Force Solicitor and one of the IT project leaders, explains:

"A Case Management System was chosen as a solution that would manage the diversity of our work without constricting us and requiring us to approach our work differently. We wanted a system that would fit with our organisation, rather than having our organisation fit with a system."

The [Iken Case Management System with Automated Time Recording](#) was chosen and implemented in August 2008. It delivered just what the team were looking for from a Case Management solution:

"As well as being easy to use, Iken was the most flexible solution. It allows our team to operate in a way that is best for us, and we now feel that we have input and ownership over the way that the system works."

"It's about timeliness, being able to quickly put your hands on a document you need"

"Information is no longer fragmented and nothing gets lost. Before we had Iken, we had four different secretaries typing up work and each had their own workbook to track where the document was filed. There was also a separate workbook for post tracking. Then of course we had information coming in by email and being stored differently by each lawyer. So when you wanted to find a piece of information there were so many places you would have to look, especially if a colleague was absent."



"Now everything is filed in one place, including emails, and we drive the work from there. You just look in the case folder to find what you need, and even archived cases are easy to access. When someone rings up, you can reliably answer the query even when a colleague is out of the office. As a result we're a lot calmer, instead of rushing around frantically looking for documents."

"We now have a better understanding of what we spend our time doing"

"One of the challenges we used to face was being able to show the value of the work we do. Iken has helped us to have a better grasp of what we actually spend our time doing, and greatly improved the information we can provide to our clients. We are able to quantify the value that our department adds to the organisation as a whole.

For instance, we can now see how much time has been spent on, say, helping officers on the street, as opposed to the time spent on more commercial work. This reporting has really helped us change our approach from fire-fighting to being more proactive, recognising and identifying where resources are needed and also where efficiencies may be gained. It's also helped our clients to understand the contribution our department makes to front line policing."

"There's a greater consistency and corporacy to what we do"

"Iken has also facilitated a greater consistency between different elements of work, and in approaches across the department; where before there were a number of independent silos of work, these are now joined up in one system. For example, if the duty legal advisor gets a query, they can search for it in Iken to see if the query has come up before and how it was answered, saving time and effort. This is worthwhile joined up working with real tangible benefits."

"And we expect tangible savings in the long run too "

"It's too early to accurately quantify the benefits of the Iken Case Management system at this time, but there is a general feeling of greater efficiency already. Time recording allows us to go to court with accurate billing, and reclaiming costs in this way is likely, over time, to show some significant savings."

What's next?

Ben Watts believes that Devon and Cornwall Constabulary's progressive legal team still have a way to go before they are using Iken to its full potential. However, the benefits of using the system for the last ten months are already clear to all team members. Work on level 2 workflows is now underway to provide enhanced automation for elements of the work and more detailed management information regarding claims settlement amounts, disputes and other commercial work. With their dynamic attitude towards the use of IT, the legal team is confident that Iken will expand with them and support their "organic growth in workload" as identified by Head of Legal, Mike Stamp.

For more information on Iken Solutions for Constabularies or other Public Sector Legal teams, visit our website: www.iken.biz/publiclegal or call us on: 0845 450 9201