

Your transforming workplace

Our digital solutions

Find out how we helped
Bedford Borough Council
transform service expectations.

Ready?



Working in the field

Like all UK local authorities, Bedford Borough Council is being squeezed from all sides. It must look to trim its budget while meeting improvements in customer service, and it must achieve all of this while motivating its employees. Bedford Borough Council is rolling out a programme of workforce mobility to deliver all of the above. Working with Vodafone, it has re-energised staff and transformed service expectations.



“

People employed in Regulatory Services are passionate about what they do. They don't want to spend all day doing paperwork, they want to do their job better and help people.”

Craig Austin,
Assistant Director
Environment, Regulatory & Recreational Services
Bedford Borough Council

The Challenge

Frontline service improvements

Bedford Borough Council is a local authority in the south east of England, overseeing a population of 157,000. Like many councils around the UK it faces a number of challenges, one of which is budget pressure. It must look for more efficient ways of working, yet continue to make improvements to frontline services.

“Our focus has to be service delivery,” says Craig Austin, Assistant Director, Bedford Borough Council. “Yes, we need to be aware of costs, but cost savings can't be the main driver. Improving things for our staff creates a happier workforce – and happier staff means you've a better chance of delivering quality outcomes.”

The Council was keen to extend its workforce mobility, allowing more staff to undertake more work out in the field which could have multiple positive impacts.

“We wanted to trial this with the Regulatory Services team,” says Craig. “It should mean faster decision making, more informed and effective visits. Plus, if the team are working faster they should also be able to fit in more visits.”

Previously, the Regulatory Services team would book inspections, take detailed notes on site, then return to the office to file the paperwork.

The process was time consuming, inefficient and not suitable for best sharing data. Mobile working, Craig explains, would improve the quality of the site visits – better access to historical data, and the output. Case files could include photos, audio and video, along with written reports.

Wary of some of the claims made by workforce mobility providers, Craig says the Council wanted to be sure it made the right investment: “Mobile working is not new, it's been around for a long time. It's only recently the right kind of technology has come along.”

Bedford was not convinced it could run its mobile workers off one device. “We do a lot of form-filling and note taking. A tablet device might have worked but we still needed a phone,” explains Craig.

The Solution

Rethinking traditional process

Total Workforce Mobility (TWM) from Vodafone is a suite of mobile applications, technology and services which helps employees spend less time on admin and more time doing their job.

Vodafone's TWM consultants suggested a mix of laptops and Galaxy 2 smartphones to the Council, so Craig set up a trial with the Council's Food Services team, with a view to roll out across Regulatory Services. "We listened to the experiences of other authorities and made sure to engage staff early," says Craig. "We wanted their thoughts on creating the solution – mobility is more than the device, it impacts on the type of forms we use, our processes. This was an opportunity to rethink how we work. Vodafone really helped move this forward."

Benefit

Greater productivity, better work/life balance

The result, says Craig, is more efficient field work and quicker administration as staff don't need to return to the office to complete paperwork. More productive staff means more inspections, or more time to spend on visits.

"People employed in these areas are passionate about what they do," he says. "They don't want to spend time doing paperwork, they want to do their job better and help people."

The trial quickly expanded from Food Services to the rest of the Regulatory Services team, including Health & Safety, Noise Pollution and Trading Standards; in total, 63 different work streams. Craig says workforce mobility is now being considered by the Adult and Child Services and Planning and Highway departments.

Inevitably, changes at the frontline have impacted the back-office, paper and print costs have been halved. Craig says with content now digitised there is less need for rooms to store paper files.

The Council has also implemented a hot desk policy, recognising that, with more staff out of the office, nearly two thirds of desks were not being used which will reduce real estate costs.

Craig says Bedford Borough Council, purely in cost terms, expects to see a return on investment within three years, with savings ploughed into frontline services. "It's hard to put a price on the most significant benefit: flexible working has created a better work/life balance for staff. Life is easier with a mobile work environment."

Why Vodafone

- Vodafone Total Workforce Mobility helps improve your team's performance by giving them the right applications and devices, so they get more done in less time.
- Increases efficiency and reduces costs.
- Helps you create a better work/ life balance for your employees.

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Regulatory & Recreational Services
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Bedford Borough

Bedford Borough Council is the local authority of the Borough of Bedford in Bedfordshire, England, overseeing a population of 157,000.

www.bedford.gov.uk

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