Bolton Council

> ❊ "At the start of this process our total care management budget was approximately £8.1m and last year we needed to reduce this by £1.6 million, without impacting the quality of service. The only way to achieve this was to work smarter, and without Perceptive Process we would have been much less confident about where to look and how to proceed."
>
> Geoff Baehren
>
> Business Analyst

Bolton is a town in the North West of England and it is the responsibility of the Council to provide the services relied upon by its 250,000 population. Two years ago, the Adult Services department at Bolton Council was faced with its biggest ever challenge, tasked with making substantial savings which amounted to 40% of its budget over a three-year period. At the same time, it was due to implement the government's Self Directed Support social care initiative.

The Adult Services department at Bolton Council works hard to safeguard vulnerable adults living in the town, such as people with physical and learning disabilities, older adults and dementia sufferers. Reducing the quality or range of valuable front-line services offered was not an option the Council was willing to consider. Pressure was on to discover areas where large cost savings could be made with no adverse impact on service delivery.

Geoff Baehren, Business Analyst at Bolton Council, was charged with leading the research and he explains: "Social work is very process-driven and we realised that if we were going to reach our financial target, then a comprehensive review of these processes was the right place to start."

To gain the deep level of insight needed to get to the heart of broken and slow processes in the timeframe required would require the help of specialist technology. Geoff and his colleagues began by attending a demonstration of Perceptive Software's process mining, design and execution solution, Perceptive Process. "We had never seen anything like it before," he comments on the first impression of the solution. "If it could reveal so much insight with the small sample of data we took along, then we were excited by the potential of what it would be capable of revealing when exposed to all of our data."

Recognising that Perceptive Process would give them the power to analyse their processes to an extent that they had not previously thought possible, Bolton Council decided to implement the system. Geoff adds: "It was clear that we could achieve in one day with Perceptive Process what would otherwise take three months. Crucially, this meant it would take less resource and we could begin reaping the rewards sooner." With the installation completed, work began on what was widely acknowledged as one of the particularly problematic areas – the Social Work Assessment process. Geoff states: "The intuitive and visual interface of Perceptive Process meant that we were up and running in no time, with only minimal training needed and no reliance on our IT department."

While Bolton Council suspected that there was an issue in the assessment process, it wasn't until they applied Perceptive Process that the true extent of the problem was revealed and the root cause identified.

The system provided a clear and comprehensive, multi-level picture of every stage in the assessment process, including detailed metrics, volumes, elapsed times between process steps and how work was being passed between individuals and teams. "When someone with a social care requirement would call the Adult Services helpdesk, protocol dictated that a visit was scheduled directly in to the calendars of one of our 150 social workers," Geoff says. "As a consequence of this, large numbers of appointments were being scheduled that did not require a visit, resulting in a waste of valuable time and resources." In fact, the time taken for social workers to attend the visit and complete the assessment would range from half a day up to a day and a half, which represented a huge time commitment.

It was clear that while the helpdesk and the social workers were doing what they were tasked to do, and were doing it to the very best of their ability, the process was inhibiting them from being more efficient and effective.

With the redesign of the whole care management process required for the introduction of the Self Directed Support initiative, as well as the remit to reduce costs, the department took the initiative and decided to refine and improve the planned visits process.

Based on the insight that Perceptive Process gave, Bolton Council elected to introduce a professional screening process providing vital second line support to the helpdesk. The new system operates in a similar way to that of the triage system used by hospital accident and emergency wards, whereby the helpdesk can escalate a case to a professional for their expert advice, rather than automatically scheduling a visit.

"You would typically think that streamlining a process should mean removing steps, but adding this element has made a really profound impact on the nature of work coming through to social workers," Geoff says. "An important benefit is that more of their time is spent with the people who need it most."

The goal of deploying Perceptive Process was to uncover areas of inefficiency, leading to workflow changes that would yield cost savings without compromising the range or quality of services offered by Bolton Council. Geoff believes the solution has lived up to its promise. "Perceptive Software has given us tremendous confidence to evaluate and successfully redesign our working practices, based on hard data," he says. "At the start of this process our total care management budget was approximately £8.1m and last year we needed to reduce this by £1.6 million, without impacting the quality of service. The only way to achieve this was to work smarter and without Perceptive Process we would have been much less confident about where to look and how to proceed. As a result, we are today more efficient, more effective and able to do far more with less."

The success of this initial project has spurred the Council to look at other departments that could benefit from Perceptive Process. "

Perceptive Process

Perceptive Process helps organisations to see what is really happening within their current business environments / processes, not what people think is happening. The tool helps you to make decisions based on objective facts rather than subjective human perceptions by allowing you to monitor your projects so that you know immediately whether or not they're working. Bottlenecks can easily be detected and critical resources can be optimised providing advance warnings about what to do if one of more resources are needed. Perceptive Process also provides dynamic behavioural reports allowing the organisation to see where things go wrong and why.

Bolton Council

Quick Facts

- Location: Bolton, England
- Focus: City government
- Department: Adult services
- Perceptive Software solution: Perceptive Process
- Budget reduction achieved: £1.6 million

The Challenges

- Reduce budget by £1.6 million without limiting the range or quality of Adult Services
- It was difficult to see how employees were carrying out their tasks
- Inefficient care management process
- Social workers are hampered by a requirement to visit all constituents, even if a visit was unnecessary

The Results

- Discovered process inefficiency that, when remedied, provided the required cost savings
- Real time picture of what staff members are doing, when and why drives process improvement
- New screening process provides vital second line support to the helpdesk
- Social workers are able to deliver care services more effectively

perceptivesoftware
from Lexmark

22701 West 68th Terrace
Shawnee, KS 66226
USA
tf   +1 800 941 7460
tel   +1 913 422 7525
fax   +1 913 422 3820

Highfield House
Foundation Business Park
8 Roxborough Way
Maidenhead Berkshire
SL6 3UD
United Kingdom
Tel   +44 0845 601 5955
Fax +44 0845 601 5966