# ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

## CASE STUDY

## CUSTOMER DETAILS

Essex County Council is an upper tier local authority based in Chelmsford and is the main public sector body in Essex. The council looks after highways, social care, infrastructure and education, amongst other responsibilities. Essex County Council employs around 7,000 staff; nearly 200 of which use Respond.

## INDUSTRY

Local Government

## APTEAN SOLUTION

Respond

## CHALLENGES

- Needed more insight to allow for desired reporting standards
- Manual time-consuming reporting and QA processes
- Push for improved and more efficient workflow management
- Limited or lost knowledge of Respond over the years due to changes in staff

## BENEFITS

- Superior report insight and clarity making it easier to spot trends and issues
- Intuitive workflow to speed up the capture and resolution journey
- A quicker and fully integrated Quality Assurance (QA) process
- Trained and confident staff with access to the Aptean portal and its user guides, videos and manuals to assist in maintaining Respond

Essex County Council (Essex CC) has been using Respond, Aptean's Complaints and Feedback Management solution, since 2008 to manage inbound enquiries and complaints, including:

- Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) complaints
- Chief Executive correspondence
- Corporate and social care statutory complaints
- Member service enquiries (a service which is provided for County Councillors)
- Freedom of Information and Environmental Impact Regulation requests

While the initial Respond system at Essex CC was fit for purpose at the time of implementation, Essex CC realised that both its own technology and that of Respond had moved on considerably since then. Essex CC decided to upgrade from Respond 3 to the latest version of Respond to take full advantage of the latest product enhancements.

# THE CHALLENGES

## REPORTING

There was a need at Essex CC to have greater clarity when reporting on the data within Respond, which the earlier version was struggling to support. A lack of Business Intelligence (BI) meant it was difficult for Essex CC to find root causes of issues and to take preventive action on them across the council.

Essex CC also has a requirement to publicly report on statutory complaints data and it was difficult to extract this information using the earlier version of Respond, which had not been configured to support this; partly due to the configuration knowledge dissipating when staff left the council.

The reporting process overall was a very manual one, including running different reports and then merging them outside of the system. Essex CC needed an overhaul to support advancements in requirements.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

Another inefficient manual process that Essex CC identified for improvement came from the area of Quality Assurance (QA). At the time, Essex CC did not have an option to automate this process. The team found they were having to send emails manually and use the "track changes" feature in Microsoft Word which was inefficient, time consuming and left ample room for error. The QA processes ideally needed to be contained within the system to create a single picture of all case quality information.

## WORKFLOW

Processes and workflow at Essex CC have evolved since the original implementation. Being unable to track a case's journey from start to finish in the system meant that Essex CC could not easily see if there were any outstanding actions, without manual interventions.

As more types of complaints and enquiries needed to be captured, again Essex CC found that the 8 year old configuration would not easily support this. Essex CC needed a simple interface which would display a user's progress, as well as allow them to choose from a longer list of enquiry or complaint types that could be updated when needed.

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>
> Olivia Shaw
> Customer Experience Lead, Essex County Council

## THE DECISION TO CHANGE

Essex CC decided that the most efficient solution would be to upgrade to the latest version of Respond, rather than starting from the ground up with a completely different solution. The upgrade would be able to support their ongoing requirements and provide them with the insights and efficiency they needed.

## THE SOLUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The very first iteration of Respond was released in 1991. In the 25 years since, the Respond solution has evolved rapidly to keep ahead of an ever changing landscape. Innovations include simplifying the case capture process whilst delivering more detailed reporting. The latest version of Respond is a leap forward in Case & Complaints Management technology, and this version was perfect for Essex CC to align with its improved internal processes.

Due to an internal need at Essex CC to have a full performance years' worth of data in Respond starting April 1st 2016, the council needed to meet a tight deadline to roll out the Respond upgrade. Working closely with Aptean's Customer Solutions team, the upgrade was completed on the last day of March and was in use by the council's employees two days later.

"Aptean Professional Services were easy to work with – they were always willing to help fix issues and provide advice during the implementation," commented Olivia Shaw, Customer Experience Lead at Essex County Council. "We took a 'train the trainer' approach and had an early training session with Aptean while we were building the system, and then did all our own training internally after go-live. Although Respond 3 and the latest version look different, the underlying solution is still familiar to our users and so they adapted to the new version of Respond really quickly."

## THE BENEFITS

The latest version of Respond features new and improved tools that have given Essex CC the clarity they needed regarding their reporting, as well as manageable workflow and QA processes.

### REPORTING

Essex CC is using the enhanced out-of-the-box reporting which, according to Olivia Shaw, "is a great improvement on what we had."

Respond users at Essex CC can see data in the system such as current tasks, the case pipeline or commitments made by other service areas as graphs or charts at a glance on their individual, personalised homepages. Users are also able to drill down to find root causes and granular information.

"The clarity and insight we have when reporting now is so much better," adds Olivia. "We've got a lot more visibility across everything, and our reporting now makes it so much easier to pick up any issues or trends."

With the latest version of Respond, Essex CC can run reports using multiple types of data directly within the system, providing a full picture immediately. The council is able to filter and configure the reports to show exactly what they need to see, for example by type of feedback or area of the council, which is especially useful when reporting on their statutory complaints data as all other types of complaint or enquiry can be removed. "Even when reporting daily on what we have open, overdue or active, we have more faith in what we're reporting on now as it leaves no room for error," comments Olivia.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

There is now a fully integrated QA process in place at Essex CC. During internal product training, the users were also instructed on the new QA process which was not just a technological change but a change in culture. "We can do everything in Respond now," said Olivia. "We aren't waiting for emails to come back covered in edits, we can process everything within the system which is much more reliable."

## WORKFLOWS

The latest version of Respond's wizard-driven case workflow has made it easy for Essex CC to track progress. "Although we could track the journey of a case with Respond 3, this latest version has made it visually so much easier to see a complaint or enquiry move from capture through to implement, review and then close. We can also prevent users from moving from one stage to another if we need to, if, for example, there is mandatory information which needs to be completed for a certain type of inbound enquiry, and this has really helped our data compliance," said Olivia.

## CONCLUSION

Upgrading their Respond system has given Essex County Council a Complaints and Feedback Management solution which has benefitted from years of increased funding and development. Process improvements compared to the legacy Respond installation easily outweigh the investment in upgrading. Essex CC is now able to produce extremely detailed and specific reports and, in turn, find the root causes of any dissatisfaction which benefits the council as a whole. It is also far easier to track complaints and enquiries.

"It's also a lot better for those who are submitting complaints and enquiries to us. Our system is more structured and we can give more reliable information on when their issue will be resolved, or if we need more information," concludes Olivia.

If you would like to find out how Respond could help you to improve your case handling process, email us at enquiries@aptean.com or visit www.aptean.com.

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