



CLIENT CASE STUDY

Large, urban council provides model for 'the ideal Covalent implementation'



Harrogate BC began implementing Covalent in April 2005 following a major organisation restructure of its 1500 employees. Over a six-month period, the team deployed and rolled-out the software to over 60 users across the organisation, with an approach that has all the hallmarks of a successful project. Namely a carefully thought out plan for introducing the software at a pace to suit the council's circumstances; nominated staff dedicated to the project, and a senior project sponsor ensuring that momentum is maintained; and a clever and interesting 'hook' to get users interested and understanding what the project was all about.

The business challenge

"With limited consistent information on how we were delivering our services we had a challenging role to say the least. Although there were corporate processes in place, and we collected the statutory PIs along with selected local indicators, there were no corporate arrangements for monitoring and reporting on performance... and no measured way of being able to compare data in a meaningful and consistent format.

"Only limited information was available; action and risk planning was done by each department without a corporate framework, making it time consuming and complicated to produce overall corporate performance information".

Kevin Douglas, Executive Director, Department of Corporate Policy and Improvement, Harrogate BC

Piloting in the planning department

From April 2005, Harrogate decided to pilot the software in one department first (Development Services), to gain a better understanding of how they wanted to really use it in the Council and also to showcase an example of how Covalent could be used to improve performance.

Rachel Glendinning, Performance Manager, worked closely with the Business Support team in Development Services to gather the necessary historic and current information, key that information into the system and then get it validated. Although a time-consuming task, absolute accuracy was necessary in order to satisfy the Audit Commission and to build confidence in the project.

The data consolidation exercise also presented an opportune time to review and standardise the council's performance management policies and procedures, and ensure that all the right people were assigned responsibility for the right items. Procedures, covering areas like data entry and data validation, were formalised in a far more structured and uniform methodology. The team also reviewed roles and responsibilities, re-assessed targets and timescales, and of course, trained the relevant officers to use the system.

"We started off from scratch on this project which meant that initially there was a large amount of work to do just in terms of data collection, collation and verification. It has, however, all proved to be worthwhile and has enabled the Council to move forward and lead the way in Performance Management".

Rachel Glendinning, Performance Manager, Harrogate BC



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A structured, carefully managed implementation

Rolling out with traffic lights

By October 2005 the data on Covalent was complete and accurate and more importantly was becoming relied upon. Any initial scepticism was rapidly fading, and interest from other parts of the organisation was building.

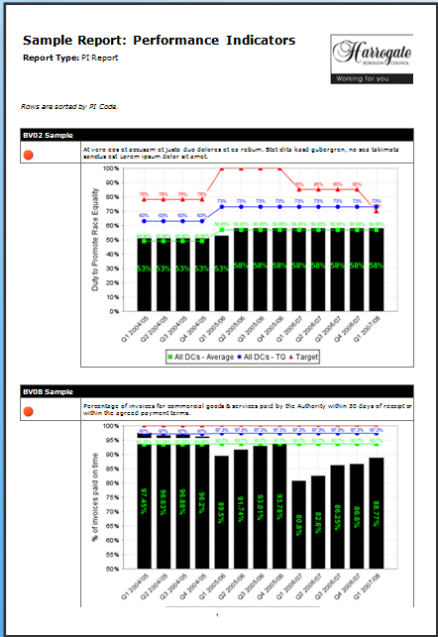
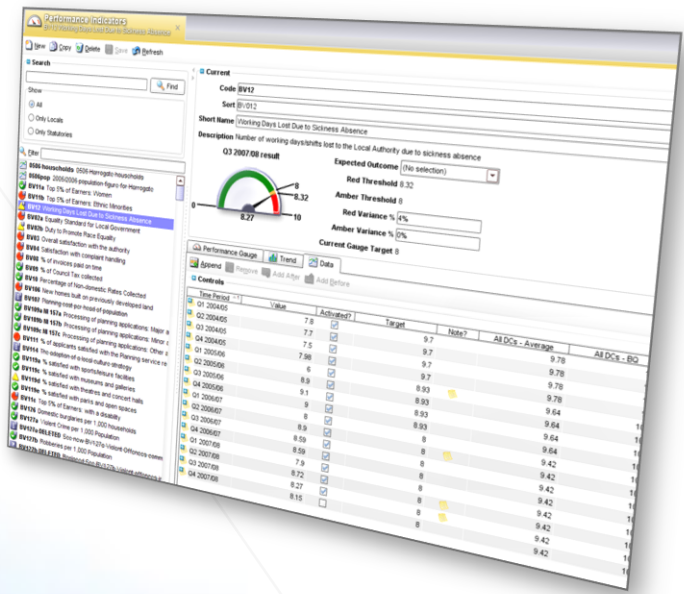
To extend the implementation across the rest of the Council, Rachel worked closely with Tricia White (Covalent's Chief Trainer) to produce tailored training lessons for a busy 3-day schedule covering everyone from the Chief Executive to Admin staff. Knowing that getting all these users to "buy in to the system" was essential to the project's success, Rachel decided to focus on the traffic light theme to explain what Covalent is all about.

For the launch event, Rachel borrowed a set of traffic lights (yes, real ones!) from the Highways Department to reinforce the idea of performance traffic-lighting in Covalent. In each user's introductory packs, as well as the customary Covalent pens and rulers, Rachel also included traffic light lollipops!

Resulting in better, more effective performance management

As a result of the implementation of Covalent, Corporate Performance Management has been transformed from a reactive administration function chasing pieces of data into a department delivering a high quality proactive service... a transformation that has quite rightly been recognised by senior managers and Councillors alike.

Covalent's performance reports are so successful that Harrogate publishes them on the Council Website and is considering sharing them directly with the Audit Commission.



"On a quarterly basis we produce a selection of management reports which are circulated to the board and members and senior management team.

These cover a selection of PIs, some of which are statutory BVPIs and others local ones particular to Harrogate. The managers in the Council have now become reliant on the information we are able to provide and are keen to have access to more."

Rachel Glendinning, Performance Manager