

# Essex County Council

Louise John & Hayley Skargon

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# 1 Introduction

Essex County Council (ECC) is England's second largest local authority and is the overarching local government body for Essex, an administrative area east of London. In collaboration with 12 district and borough councils, two unitary authorities, and about 300 town and parish councils, the Council provides vital services to a varied population of around 1.4 million people over an area of 1,300 square miles.

Information Services (IS) are an in-house Information Services department who support a user base of around 10,000 County Council employees, plus external customers. Made up of around 200 people, IS provide a fully managed IT service, looking after servers, networks, websites and applications in partnership with external suppliers.

Within IS sits the dedicated Service Management team. Made up of six people, including process owners, process managers and an ITIL lead, they are committed to the adoption and Continual Service Improvement of IS's ITIL processes.



## 2 Adopting ITIL

### **WHAT CHALLENGES WERE YOU TRYING TO SOLVE WITH THE HELP OF ITIL?**

When David Wilde joined in 2011 as Chief Information Officer (CIO), the IT function had been in a period of transition. The customer base had little or no faith in the IT department and there was a service report full of red Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). We had silos of knowledge without adequate tools to enable sharing and out of date documentation. As Essex County Council was and is under continued financial pressure, with aspirations to become a truly mobile and flexible workforce, we needed to standardize our estate, meet our Service Level Agreement (SLA), gain control of the service, get our underpinning contracts into line and capitalize on sensible outsourcing opportunities, such as our networking.

## HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT ITIL?

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David Wilde had previously worked for the Cabinet Office (from 1998–2001) and was involved in the early design and creation of ITIL.

## HAS ITIL TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION BEEN USEFUL TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS?

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Yes – ITIL Process Owners are trained to intermediate level and the whole department has been trained to at least foundation level. Ensuring everyone is trained to foundation level has really helped to gain momentum and increase awareness and understanding. The Service Management team have also completed ‘what ITIL looks like in practice’ sessions – so those who have completed the formal training can then easily see how we already follow the ITIL processes and their roles and responsibilities as part of this.

## WHY DID YOU CHOOSE ITIL RATHER THAN SOME OTHER METHODOLOGY?

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Because it's the best – it gets the right blend of service management, infrastructure management and customer focus. It is internationally recognized and it has proven successful in both the UK and Europe. David Wilde had previously adopted ITIL in four separate organizations and had seen the difference it makes.

## HOW DID YOU APPROACH ITIL'S ADOPTION?

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Our ITIL journey began with the help of third party consultants who documented and educated us on 7 processes – Incident Management, Problem Management, Service Asset & Configuration Management (SACM), Change Management, Release Management and an improvement process based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle and Continual Service Improvement (CSI) approach. We then started a brand new Service Management team from scratch to bring these processes to life, to educate, implement and continually improve. To start with, we had one team member per process, but quickly moved to a structure where team members were responsible for a lifecycle stage (e.g. Service Operations, Service Transition) instead. We then embarked on training the whole department and working closely with all the team to bring their current processes and procedures into ITIL alignment.

## WHAT PUSH-BACK HAVE YOU FELT WHEN ADOPTING ITIL?

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At the start, we felt a lot of push-back due to a lack of understanding and the fear of extra work and extra overhead on top of day jobs. There was a view that ITIL just created a lot more paperwork when we, as a department, were trying to be agile and responsive to the customer. There were also silos between Service Strategy, Service Design, Service Transition and Service Operations – people didn't see the value of ITIL to the whole department and organization, they just viewed it as something they might have to do.

## WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES WHEN ADOPTING ITIL?

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Dealing with the push-back to ensure process compliance was one issue. Also, the Business As Usual (BAU) vs CSI compromise – getting people to take a fresh view of what they were doing to see where and how we could improve our service. For the Service Management team, it was taking the documents that had been created by the consultants and digesting them, understanding the ITIL theory, then making it a reality at ECC – and getting other people enthusiastic about it!

## WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

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- Started with less – we tried to implement all the processes all at once without really realizing that it is a journey, and we underestimated the dependencies between the processes. Definitely start with less and build from there
- Ensured the process owners – the ones bringing it to life – had the time and space to take in the theory and apply it, allowing time to build confidence and knowledge. Then, encouraging them to educate the process managers and practitioners to gain buy-in. It is very difficult to adopt ITIL without the right people involved – 'making it real' is key
- Implemented CSI in a quick and easy way from the start, rather than overcomplicating it and making CSI unachievable.

## WHAT WENT RIGHT?

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- Our CIO had the vision and was prepared to support the investment in the implementation and continuation – understanding that it is a journey and it's important to stick with it
- Implementing a team whose sole focus was pragmatic ITIL alignment. The team were enthusiastic, willing to learn and passionate about getting the whole department excited and on board with it
- Getting the right balance between the external consultants and the new Service Management team in order to share knowledge and upskill the team members.

## WHAT ACHIEVEMENTS ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

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- Our KPI journey – we identified the KPIs that were important in regaining the trust of our customers and focused our CSI on getting those KPIs from red to green. In fact, we have had a 30% improvement in our KPIs since the adoption of ITIL. Our biggest improvements are Standard Service Requests delivered within target, which were formally at just was 32%, and are now at 86%, and we have had a 25% reduction in Major Incidents
- Our CSI culture – we now have a culture where CSI is embedded, celebrated, part of the day job and enables everyone to get involved
- Awareness and ITIL education – when people come back from their ITIL foundation training and can understand and see how ITIL is adopted in ECC and how it all fits together
- Our process compliance – we have achieved sustained and improved results in all of our audit assurance over the last three years. This is most notable within Service Transition, where all audit results have improved, but in particular within Service Asset and Configuration Management, which has moved from 'No assurance' to 'Substantial assurance'.

## HOW (SPECIFICALLY) DID ITIL MAKE IT EASIER TO PUT THINGS RIGHT?

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- ITIL makes it easier as it avoids a lot of questions and queries by setting best practice standards. The framework is logical, reasonable and transparent – making it hard to disagree with!

### 3 ITIL's Continuing Use

#### HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY UTILIZE ITIL?

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ITIL is now embedded as Business As Usual. It is at the centre of everything we do. For all CSI, we refer to ITIL, actively encouraging alignment every day.

#### IS EVERYTHING PERFECT NOW?

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No – although most of our KPIs are now green, we are still on our journey with a way to go, still maturing our processes, still improving, still educating and enthusing!

#### WHAT ARE THE CURRENT CHALLENGES?

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We are currently working our way back through the lifecycle. We are quite mature in Service Operations and Transition, so have set our sights on bringing Service Strategy and Service Design up to the same maturity level.

#### HOW ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO IT?

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Through our CSI process – identifying the areas which are causing the most pain for the customer or ourselves and improving them step by step.

#### WHAT OTHER METHODOLOGIES ARE YOU USING?

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Across the department, we also use APMP, TOGAF and ISO27001. We don't use a formal agile methodology but our project team, PMO, TDA's and applications development do use an agile approach.

#### HOW DO THESE DIFFERENT METHODOLOGIES WORK TOGETHER?

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We have worked on improving the interfaces between the processes – e.g. TOGAF inputs into the Service Design package and APMP has defined, documented and understood interfaces across the lifecycle but, most importantly, with release management.

#### WHAT PLANS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE FUTURE?

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In the medium term, we are looking to gain SDI accreditation for our Service Desk and in the long term we would like to gain ISO20000 accreditation.





## 4 What are your recommended Best Practices?

### TOP FIVE ITIL SHOULD DO'S

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- Get appropriate stakeholder engagement from the start – in every level of the organization, from the CIO to the service desk analyst, paying customer making the decisions to the IT end-user. Enthusiastic and empowered stakeholders are one of the main factors in the success of ITIL from the start and going forwards
- Finding flexibility in the framework – ITIL is a great recipe for success, but should be adopted and adapted to make it appropriate for your organization
- Do CSI – don't be scared of it! Focus on CSI as soon as you start. It is sometimes looked at as a future dream state but, as soon as an ITIL process is in place, it can be improved! Make it easy – don't overcomplicate it
- Make it real – explain and demonstrate how ITIL works in practice, bring the documentation and the textbooks to life!
- Excite your process owners – with the right people, right attitude, education and understanding, you can't go wrong!

### TOP FIVE ITIL DON'T DO'S

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- Don't forget about the business – keep the customer at the centre. It's easy to forget that we exist for them, and keeping them happy is the aim of the game
- Don't get bogged down with paperwork – make the process documents easy to digest and not theoretical – make it real
- Don't bombard people with ITIL jargon – if you are excited by ITIL, it's easy to talk about the CSIs for SACM's KPIs, but some of your stakeholders who you are trying to excite and empower might feel alienated
- Don't assume you're going to get it right the first time – even CSI needs CSIs. We've taken our improvement process through CSI just recently, there is always improvements needed, whatever the maturity of your processes and organization
- Don't stop believing – don't give up when it gets tough or when there is resistance, keep the momentum going – it is worth it in the end.



## About AXELOS

AXELOS are a joint venture company, created by the Cabinet Office on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Capita plc to run the global best practice portfolio, including the ITIL® and PRINCE2® professional standards. The goals of AXELOS are many and varied, each one aimed at helping businesses and individuals reach success, empowering them to truly stand out in a competitive market:

- We continually promote and advocate quality training
- We strive to encourage growth, development and progress
- We always look for innovative new solutions to improve best practice standards and processes across the board.

The result is improved skills that are relevant to the industry as a whole and enhanced employability for all, benefiting the global economy. The benefit to you and your business in particular: better trained employees, streamlined operations, and the peace of mind of knowing that you are working with an industry-leading organization, which provides products and services with a long-standing reputation for setting the industry benchmark.

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