Bury Council's Legal Department Underpinned by Lexis® Visualfiles™ Awarded Lexcel Accreditation

Lexis®Visualfiles™

Bury Council Case Study

Industry: Local Government
Product: Lexis® Visualfiles™

Bury Council consists of six towns including Bury, Prestwich, Radcliffe, Ramsbottom, Tottington and Whitefield.

"Visualfiles truly provides the legal services department a modern business environment"

The legal services department based in Bury, focusses on three core areas including land and property, social services and litigation. Given the volume of cases and matters that the legal services department deals with, a case and matter management tool is indispensable.

The department has been using the Lexis® Visualfiles™ platform for more than 15 years. Andy Carlile, Practice Manager of the Department, talks to LexisNexis® Enterprise Solutions about the value that the solution provides to the organisation.

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How is the legal department using Lexis Visualfiles?

Andy Carlile: Visualfiles underpins the legal services department, all matters and cases are executed from within the solution – everything from planning and highway, and social services-related issues to environmental litigation.

We use Visualfiles to routinely make incremental improvements to processes to continuously enhance lawyer productivity and overall efficiency of the department. Recently, we automated the creation of a letter for the debt team – it took us no more than 30 minutes to do so. This is only possible as the solution provides exceptional, in-built developmental capability to easily create new processes and applications within the Visualfiles platform. Presently we have 17 case applications that are unique to our legal services department.

Visualfiles has enabled us to embed best practice into the legal services department's day to day operation. We have been awarded the Lexcel accreditation, the Law Society's legal practice quality mark for excellence in legal practice management and excellence in client care. The auditor's report is glowing about the way the department runs.

"Management structures and policies and procedures are well developed, and the practice has been very forward thinking in its use of ICT, making improvements to overall work efficiency and productivity and making significant reductions in expenditure."

Lexcel Accreditation Report,
The Law Society

Lexcel
Practice Management Standard
Law Society **Accredited**

"We use Visualfiles to routinely make incremental improvements to processes to continuously enhance lawyer productivity and overall efficiency of the department."

Underpins the entire legal services department

All matters & cases executed from within the solution

Perfect for all council departments

Embeds best practice into the legal services department's day to day operation

Exceptional, in-built developmental capability to easily create new processes and applications

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What business benefits is the legal department realising from Lexis Visualfiles?

Andy Carlile: Visualfiles has enabled us to become a paper-free organisation. Today, we have negligible storage and printing costs, which is a huge monetary saving for the department to the tune of almost £70,000. A major plus of Visualfiles is that it is a flexible platform that easily integrated with external third party solutions. This in turn allows us to develop new functionality within the solution. For example, we have integrated a document bundling solution from Zylpha so all case related document bundles are electronic. On average, the department creates 10 document bundles a week, and the size of each can vary from 120 pages to over 2000. The cost of a typical bundle tends to be in the region of £1800. Furthermore, case workers can access these bundles from case histories residing in Visualfiles per requirement, eliminating repetition to bundle creation.

Visualfiles also facilitates effective risk management in the department. For instance, we are able to easily identify any conflict of interest between teams. A typical example is our Arms Length Housing Organisation which buys property from the Council. Often, there are situations where members within our team are required to act for different sides – i.e. the purchaser and the seller. It is very simple to institute rules within Visualfiles to prohibit the respective individuals in the department from accessing each other's files.

The efficiency and productivity benefits that automation delivers are undeniable. Simple tasks like creation of a new matter in Visualfiles takes minutes. We have configured Visualfiles in a way that on-boarding a matter is fool proof. The system asks the user all the relevant questions and provides the necessary options, so there is almost no possibility of the matter being incorrectly set up. New users of the system find this very useful as they don't need any knowledge of the internal financial and organisational structures of the department to efficiently use Visualfiles right from the start. Such is the extent to which the system can be tailored.

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- ✓ Visualfiles has enabled the department to become a paper-free organisation
- ✓ Huge monetary saving for the department - almost £70,000
- ✓ Facilitates effective risk management
- ✓ On-boarding a matter is fool proof
- ✓ Virtually eliminates errors when setting up matters
- ✓ Simple tasks such as the creation of a new matter take minutes
- ✓ Flexible platform enables the development of new functionality within the solution

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15 years is a long time, have you ever considered moving to another case and matter management system?

Andy Carlile: Actually, we haven't. We have recently upgraded to the latest version of Visualfiles. We have been using the Visualfiles platform since its SolCase days and over the years the solution has evolved with our changing needs, both in terms of technology and functionality. It is intuitive to use, so adoption of the system by front-end users has never been an issue. At the back end on the development side, again it is simple. I don't have a technical background, but I have been able to learn and customise it to the organisation's needs. Visualfiles truly provides the legal services department a modern business environment.

Also, the support that LexisNexis provides is excellent. For any issues that crop up, if we can't resolve them internally (which we often can), the account management and professional services teams are at the end of a phone line. These teams have knowledge of the solution of course, but they also appreciate the intricacies of the workings of a Council's legal services department, which is vital.

What are your plans for Visualfiles in the near future?

Andy Carlile: No technology project is ever complete. We are fine-tuning Visualfiles literally every day. Process improvements require ongoing, iterative progression so that the system can be optimised to deliver the most gain to the organisation. Additionally, we are looking to introduce a robot in Visualfiles to allow us to further automate proceedings in low level debt recovery matters. All being well, the new functionality should be in place by the end of 2016.

> *"Visualfiles truly provides the legal services department a modern business environment."*

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For more information

To find out more about Visualfiles and to discuss your company's specific business requirements, please visit:
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