

Providing a 'future-proofed platform'

CASE STUDY:

**Child Care Legal Team in South Gloucestershire
Council is Fully Digital with Lexis Visualfiles**

With a population of 279,000, South Gloucestershire Council covers the towns of Yate, Chipping Sodbury, Thornbury, Kingswood, Filton and conurbations north of Bristol.

Lexis® Visualfiles™ is the case management system for the entire legal department at the Council. The legal department, with 28 users currently, was a longstanding user of SolCase, the original version of the Visualfiles case management system, and recently migrated to the latest issue of the software.

Karen Moore, Senior Childcare Solicitor/Legal Team Manager (People) at the Council talked to LexisNexis Enterprise Solutions, about the solution's use specifically in the Child Care team and the benefits the department is seeing. Child Care is the biggest team in the Council's legal department.

"Not many case management systems, if any, are designed to deliver such capability."





How would you describe the Child Care team's experience of moving from SolCase to Visualfiles?

Karen Moore: The transition to Visualfiles was smooth and seamless. The day after the transition, we simply carried on with our work from the day before as normal. The reason for this is the ease of use of Visualfiles. We didn't feel that we needed to learn to use a new system, it was intuitive to adopt. This is a huge positive for us as there was no disruption work-wise. We are legal professionals and so simply need the technology to work. This current version of Visualfiles meets all our needs today, and more.

What were your key drivers to upgrade to the latest version of Visualfiles?

Karen Moore: We were mindful that legacy applications can create incompatibility issues with other applications, creating all manner of problems, which we wanted to pre-empt. But more importantly, we wanted a future-proofed platform.

Today with Visualfiles, we are in a position to take advantage of the new features and functions as and when they are introduced in the solution, receive the highest levels of support and crucially, minimise the risk of cyber security and data breaches.

How is Visualfiles currently used in Child Care?

Karen Moore: We use Visualfiles to manage the complete legal process, from beginning to end. There is a total of 10 fee earners in the Child Care team and typically at any one point in time, there are approximately over 300 live cases being processed in the system.

Visualfiles has enabled us to become fully digital. We don't open any paper files at all. This has delivered efficiencies to us – due to the sensitive nature of the work undertaken by the department, there is a vast amount of documentation per case that we deal with. We use the solution to record everything from email

IMPACT

- **30% Reduction in administrative duties**
- **No requirement for Large IT team or Technical Expertise**
- **Future-proofed platform**

correspondence, and documents through to fee earner time spent. The system has facilitated a near 'paperless' environment.

Please elaborate on the benefits the Child Care team is experiencing with Visualfiles?

Karen Moore: Visualfiles is the central repository of information and represents our audit trail for all the activity that is undertaken by the Child Care team. We have visibility of all the cases that are currently open, and team members can go into the system to check on the status of each case. This is especially useful as it's easy for colleagues to progress cases in the absence of the designated fee earners, should a situation arise. We must adhere to the 26-week protocol that requires individual cases to be progressed through court within this timeframe.

The court bundling capability offered by Visualfiles is an asset to the team. The family court has a practice direction on bundles, which is that each bundle is 350 pages or less in size. With all the documents available in Visualfiles, the time saving in preparing these bundles is significant. Additionally, the flexibility that Visualfiles enables for adapting the court bundles is good. We often need to create 'hearing' bundles, that can contain only those documents that are pertinent to the court hearing on the day. With all the court bundles on the system, the fee earner can easily view and amend the index of an existing court bundle, email the revised document catalogue to Legal Support for preparation of the appropriate bundle.



Has the Child Care team also realised any efficiency gains?

Karen More: The efficiency the court bundling capability has delivered to the Child Care team is tangible. Previously, we had a large team of secretaries to help manage the bundling process. Now the secretarial pool is down to just 30 per cent of the original size. Today, all court bundles are 'Safe Dropped' to the court and the concerned parties, which is enabled by the integration between Visualfiles and Safe Drop, a secure file sharing service. There is no requirement to carry the physical bundles to court as fee earners carry the bundles on their laptops.

"The most valuable advantage of Visualfiles...there's no requirement for a large IT team or technical expertise to support or make adjustments to the solution."

The search facility in the solution is excellent. Sometimes, new cases pertaining to previous matters are opened. If an 'expert' report is correctly identified and searched for by a fee earner in Visualfiles, the psychological report immediately appears. This functionality is very useful as frequently, other local authorities ask us for information on past cases. We can quickly search for the files and share them electronically. Previously, a form would be filled and emailed to the Records department, a paper version obtained, and photocopies sent.

Visualfiles is serving as a good reporting mechanism. We record our time spent in Visualfiles, so there's transparency of how much time fee earners are spending on the cases and matters, where processes can potentially be speeded up and so on.

Finally, Visualfiles is supporting home and flexible working. Most of our staff work from home between one to two days a week. With Visualfiles, case workers have all the information they need on their fingertips, regardless of where they are working from.

What's next in terms of the further development of Visualfiles?

Karen Moore: We are constantly working with the LexisNexis team to help us make process improvements to fine-tune the solution to our requirements. For instance, we are currently reviewing our processes for more efficiency gains such as eliminating excess time on generating letters and emails, centralising key contacts and other important case information and transitioning the address book into the Entity structure. We are also looking to adopt the Visualfiles Accelerator Framework, which will enable us to create new solutions within the platform.

This is perhaps the most valuable advantage of Visualfiles. Firstly, the ability to continuously improve underpins the system. Secondly, there's no requirement for a large IT team or technical



expertise to support or make adjustments to the solution. It's noteworthy that two part-time members of staff – presently PA to the Head of Resource and an Administrative Executive – can regularly make process adjustments in response to incremental capability requirements of legal teams. Neither are technically trained individuals. Not many case management systems, if any, are designed to deliver such capability.

Visualfiles has been a success in the Child Care team, and there are now plans to emulate this way of working across the other legal teams in the Council too.

"The transition to Visualfiles was smooth and seamless. The day after the transition, we simply carried on with our work from the day before as normal."

Visualfiles. Automate workflows, improve processes.

Visualfiles is ready to optimise almost any process in any business to help you improve efficiencies and provide excellence in client service. Visualfiles is built on decades of experience in key industry verticals, by experts who understand the unique challenges that face your organisation.

Contact us to learn more: salesinfo@lexisnexis.co.uk | 0113 226 2065
www.lexisnexis-es.co.uk/visualfiles