

Hull City Council rolls out cross-functional service desk support to entire organization of 14,000 people

Council frees up a third of its storage capacity, shifts 78% of call logging online, lowers costs and boosts internal and external service levels



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Country **United Kingdom**
Industry **Local Government**

Key Statistics

- 15,000 incidents and requests per month
- 8,500 users supported
- 250,000 constituents covered by Council
- 23 wards

Key Challenge

- Better serve the needs of the organization
- Improve performance against key SLAs

Key Strategy

- Focus on key data sources and enable a greater level of automation

Key Benefits

- 78% of call logging online up from 15%, freeing up engineer resources
- Reduced costs of IT Service Delivery
- Faster and more accurate call resolution
- 87% customer satisfaction representing a proven increase
- Increased productivity and effectiveness
- Data storage reduced by 3 Terabytes
- Automated lever process for 8500 staff

Hull City Council is the governing body for the City of Kingston Hull employing 14,000 people and serving more than 250,000 constituents across 23 wards. The council operates a Shared Services model which has adopted an integrated, single support desk approach across various operational areas including ICT, HR, Procurement, Occupational Safety, Door Entry Administration, Building Cleaning and various application support functions.

The Shared Service Desk handles approximately 750 calls, e-mails and Web requests every day. To drive efficiency, Hull City Council sets targets for the Shared Services team outlined in a Service Level Agreement (SLA). This means that the Service Desk has a heightened awareness of the cost, quality and timeliness required to deliver support services to the rest of the council competitively. As such, the Shared Service Desk is always looking for new ways to streamline processes in order to manage and raise service levels, whilst keeping a keen eye on costs.

Challenge

Hull City Council needed a solution to address two challenges. Firstly, the aim was to manage its IT environment more effectively to better serve the needs of the organization. Secondly, it wanted to consolidate its disparate databases into one Configuration Management Data Base (CMDB) to improve performance against the SLAs set by the council. The council recognized that utilizing the ITIL (IT Infrastructure Library) - based ITSM solution, **assyst**, would address the above challenges as well as underpin Best Practice in service provision areas outside ICT. Extending the use of **assyst** beyond IT would further consolidate and reduce resource requirements, saving the council money and improving the efficiencies of the organization as a whole.

During the council's implementation of **assyst**, it became apparent that within the service areas a multitude of standalone databases and spreadsheets were used and, subsequently, the amount of time being spent on independently updating these systems was considerable.

The lack of any appropriate control methods and notification of changes meant these systems were never accurate. Hull City Council realized that focusing on key data sources and then enabling automation, which was possible following the creation of an interface with the key HR system, would significantly increase efficiencies and accuracy of the Service Desk CMDB. This data could then be used as a central source for feeding other support systems and thus act as a definitive source for other data cleansing exercises. The improved reliability of data also allowed the council to archive historic information stored on servers and clear orphaned data in addition to gaining an increased awareness of the status of users within the organization.

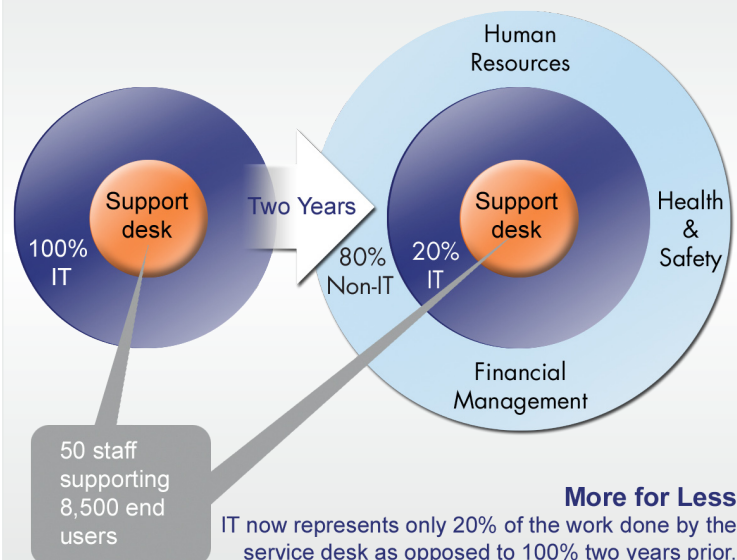
Needless time spent on duplicate data maintenance meant that the Service Desk was unable to access a single accurate source, leading to extensive lead times in call resolution. This had a knock-on effect on service levels, costs and ultimately customer satisfaction.

The identification of non-IT key data sources to enrich existing information held within the **assyst** CMDB offers additional management functionality for all users of the Service Desk.

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Consolidation of business services to a single service desk

IT now represents just 20% of the work done by Hull City Council's service desk, with non-IT services representing an additional 80% - all managed with the same number of service desk support staff as before.



Laying the Foundations

Hull City Council knew that its in-house IT call management tool was not adequate for the improvements required to remain competitive. It also recognized that implementing ITIL as an IT Service Management framework would help the Shared Service Desk to drive service levels up, help streamline processes and improve data quality.

The council chose Axios' **assyst** for a number of reasons. With a twenty year heritage, **assyst** is the first solution designed specifically around the ITIL framework. Due to its out-of-the-box functionality, the council could be fully functional with **assyst** within a matter of weeks compared with an industry average deployment time of 18 months. The **assyst** user interface is also very intuitive and user-friendly, so the solution could easily be extended to other areas of the Shared Services environment without the need for additional investment. After selecting **assyst**, the council started realizing the benefits of the solution within just two weeks.

Steve Moffat, Infrastructure Strategy Principal Officer, Hull City Council, explains,

*"Since there are a wide range of technology users at the council, having a solution that would suit individuals at every level was important. **assyst** allows everyone in the Shared Service Desk to view all of the enquiries from one screen, giving them a holistic view of incidents across the business. **assyst** is at the heart of the organization; effectively one system that rules them all. It turns a database into a catalyst for relationship-building so that personal service can be offered to each employee and customer that calls the Service Desk."*

Moffat continues: *"Since we use a Shared Services model, it is vitally important that the Service Desk delivers the best service levels possible into all areas of the business. The **assyst** solution enables us to benchmark our progress against SLAs. This means that the team is always focused on improving."*

The council now has over 200 **assyst** users and in excess of 8,500 end-users. Since deploying **assyst**, the council has experienced increased customer satisfaction year-on-year, which can be quantified by its recent quarterly ICT survey showing that 87% of users were happy with the software, as well as a significant reduction in costs. Hull City Council now has a complete picture of its entire organization with a centralized CMDB giving access to accurate, up-to-date information, improving performance and saving costs.

Steve Moffat explains: *"We are always looking for new ways to increase efficiencies, improve service levels and make the best use of budgets. Implementing a Shared Services model has helped, but the next step was to consolidate the information held across other, non-IT business functions to enhance communication with employees and customers. Most importantly, we needed a solution that would enable us to resolve enquiries efficiently without putting strain on employees and resources."*

Beyond IT – extending the benefits of **assyst** to other business areas

Having consolidated a large number of previously independent databases means that functions outside of IT now use **assyst** to align with the needs of the business. For instance, employee details were previously held in a separate system causing accuracy issues, especially with leavers. This type of information, along with information on where the employee is based, is entered into the central CMDB, eliminating duplication and increasing accuracy for the support staff.

The council created an interface to its key HR system, enabling it to automatically create and update user credentials as a direct feed. Additional information such as Active Directory (AD) data and contact details supplement the Configuration Item (CI) of the user within the Service Desk. Further details regarding the employee's job description, service area and section reflect the master HR record. This information is then used to directly feed the Intranet Staff Directory and Outlook address list, so staff contact details can be identified rapidly.

If a member of staff leaves the council, the leave date is fed into the user's CI within the Service Desk. The Service Desk then automatically starts the predefined leavers' process by creating a service call, which is picked up and processed directly through integration to AD. This undertakes the AD tasks of disabling accounts. In addition, the personal data is then compressed and moved to a holding area, enabling managers to request access should there be any requirement.

After 90 days, a supplementary call is raised to delete the AD, e-mail account and quarantined data. The automation and defining of key reference data sources has enabled the council to reduce management overheads and offer definitive data to other systems/users requiring user data.

Moffat explains: *"Having identified core data, we are able to share this across the Service Desk and now have the ability to filter information utilizing Customer Service Groups (CSGs). This allows us to display only appropriate HR details to the support desk, ensuring protection of sensitive data. By having accurate user information, we can remove users rapidly from other ICT systems, with a full audit trail being held within the Service Desk. Customer feedback on increased reliability of the staff directories has also encouraged employees to check their own contact details and an increasing amount of colleagues now proactively notify ICT when their contact details change."*

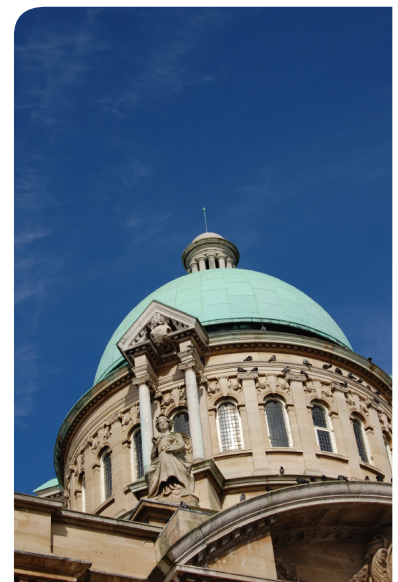
Moffat continues, *"Automatically disabling accounts saves time and improves IT security. It also reduces IT storage requirements, saving us money. In fact, since deploying **assyst**, the technology team has been able to delete so many obsolete files, it has freed up one third of our allocated storage space, releasing over 3 terabytes of data stored in servers."*

The Future of ITSM at Hull City Council

Council employees log their own queries with IT via Axios' Self-Service system, **assystNET**, which speeds up

enquiry resolution. As a result of this, call logging has now increased from 15 per cent before the implementation to over 80 per cent. This inherent automation and standardization considerably contributes to the increase in Service Desk efficiency. The council intends to keep encouraging employees to log queries online by implementing desktop shortcuts and communicating via the company newsletters and extranet.

Steve Moffat comments: *"The **assyst** solution has given Hull City Council complete and accurate visibility of all of its IT and many non-IT assets – an incredible feat for any large organization."*



Axios Systems in Local Government

Axios has been providing ITSM solutions to the IT industry for more than 20 years. Our focus on helping companies deliver top-line value by managing effective operations, optimizing efficiency and driving through business transformation has been particularly well demonstrated in the public sector with more than 300 customers including The Scottish Parliament, The Canadian Houses of Parliament, the European Commission, ITO, as well as numerous local government organizations.