

Cafcass transforms efficiency of finance function with a Cloud-first strategy

Partners with Advanced for a 24/7 Cloud-based, Software as a Service (SaaS) solution



At Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) our primary role is to work with children going through the family justice courts, ensuring their voices are heard. This could be either private law cases where parents are separating or public law cases where local authorities are asking the court to make a decision regarding a child.

All of our work comes through as court referrals and we work with around 120,000 children each year.

We are the largest employer of social workers in the country and were named 'Best Social Work Employer 2015'.

Our challenge

The biggest challenge we face is the huge demand for our services; the number of cases being referred to us is rising year on year. The Ministry of Justice has provided extra funds so we can employ more practitioners, but in order to cope with the workload it is also vital to ensure the equipment, systems and applications that we provide help our staff to be as efficient, productive and flexible as possible.

With this in mind, we have a very forward-focused Cloud IT strategy: we operate across the whole of England, so it is particularly important for us that we have fully integrated,

web-enabled, mobile systems in place, rather than a traditional on premise operation. Our vision therefore involves migrating core IT systems and applications to the Cloud, opening up connectivity, collaboration and communication amongst colleagues across the country and across agencies. This is in line with the government's progressive digital agenda, its Cloud use directives and encouragement of public sector bodies to buy software and services that operate in this environment. Every IT decision we make is part of this strategy, nothing is done on a piecemeal basis.

Our finance system, which is critical to the smooth running of our organisation, was previously hosted on an internal server. We knew we needed to accomplish two things; first, to provide a system operating 24/7 and second to integrate what had been two separate finance systems into a single system. In addition, we required fast and effective real-time financial insight with a more flexible and streamlined approach to producing management information – moving away from shifting masses of information in Excel spreadsheets. On top of this, we were also keen to drive efficiencies, and had to ensure we stayed within our target budget for implementation and the subsequent ongoing contract - the Cloud-based, Software as a Service (SaaS) from Advanced provided this.

Client >

Cafcass

Project >

Integrating Cloud-based finance system

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Finding a solution

We needed to partner with an organisation at the forefront of delivering a collaborative Cloud strategy who could help us innovate, excel and grow. They had to be part of the government's framework of preferred suppliers with a deep understanding of our sector. We wanted this partner to work closely with our people as part of our inclusive IT strategy, and help us move forward in a cost-effective and agile way.

Advanced is an organisation we have worked with successfully over a number of years, so we were delighted when they came out top in our search, meeting all of the criteria and impressing us with their tender, interviews and responses to our questions.

Julie Brown, our Director of Resources at Cafcass, explains how the project got underway: *"We decided we also wanted to involve end users outside of the finance team in the whole process. We employ a very collaborative approach to all things within the organisation, including IT, and by getting user involvement at all levels in the pre-selection and final stages of choosing our supplier they bought into the solution; nothing came as a surprise. Control was given to them, challenges were faced and overcome and I think everyone in the small team who worked on this project, supported by excellent consultants at Advanced, feel a huge sense of achievement in the Cloud-based solution we have implemented."*

Benefits we have seen

Clearly, since we have been able to decommission our on premise servers, our IT department is no longer spending time and money running them. By removing the legacy applications sitting on these machines it has simplified our back-office operations and this is an important part of our strategy going forward.

We now have a single, integrated Cloud-based system and we have shared expertise around this - in the past with our legacy applications sometimes there was just one person who knew the detailed workings of it. We are now much more in control, have the potential to exploit much greater flexibility and reporting and have removed a significant element of risk. The solution has the potential to transform significantly the efficiency of our finance function, providing greater control, and we believe our end users are also enjoying the contemporary look and feel of the new system.

Julie concludes, "We enjoy working with organisations who can offer specialist knowledge and guidance. It is very empowering to have these partnerships and to be streamlining our processes so that we can operate in the most efficient way. Advanced not only managed this transition of our finance system, but they continue to support us in our Cloud-first strategy. Their expertise, support and Cloud-based solutions help ensure that we have the most agile and cost-effective systems for our organisation now and in the future. This is vital if we are to continue to deliver the very highest levels of service."

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Julie Brown >
Director of Resources >
Cafcass

*Cloud Financials is hosted on an AWS platform

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