

Essex County Council

Developing Insight & Analytics

In brief:

Essex County Council (ECC) is a large local authority supporting a community of approximately 1.4 million residents and with an overall budget of £2.3bn to deliver services.

In 2013 ECC began implementing a decision to become a 'Commissioning Council' that entailed separating the functions of commissioning and service delivery.

This decision was taken as part of an overarching plan to address ongoing challenges to delivery of strategic outcomes and where, in common with other local authorities, tightening fiscal constraints called for deeper insight into community needs and better, evidence-based, decisions around service design and delivery.

A key element of implementation was the creation – in November 2013 – of a Commissioning Support function, incorporating an Insight & Analytics (I&A) team, with the principal purpose of providing Commissioners with support, first of all, in carrying out detailed research, engagement and analysis to understand future needs and demand for services and then to lead multi-agency 'task and finish' groups in redesigning and commissioning services.

In implementing the new Commissioning Support function, the aim was to create an internal professional consultancy services and it was recognised that new ways of thinking – linked to new products, tools and approaches – would need to be developed.

It was also an ambition to develop 'best in class' capability with a view to being able to sell services to other organisations.

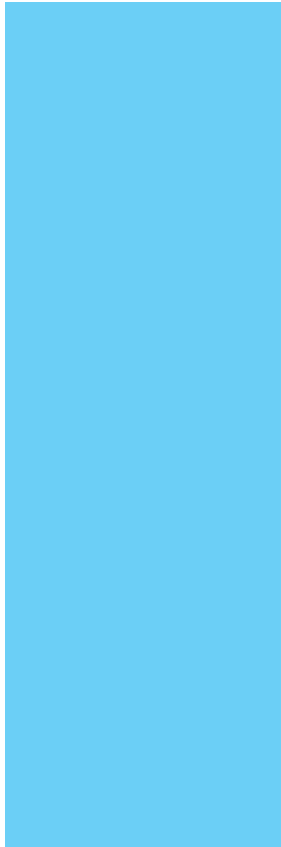
Think with us ...

If you're reading this, then you're probably just like us, always curious about new ways of working.

The aim of our case studies is to promote sharing of knowledge and from it thought leadership. We hope this study helps you think through and explore some of the issues we now face.

Your questions and feedback are welcome.

Call us on 023 8022 5520 or email maddie.potter@alexander-ecc.co.uk



Essex County Council



What they wanted:

To play an effective role in the Commissioning Support function, I&A needed to be able to support commissioners in gaining insight and meaning from information to enable better, evidence-based decisions through:

- Creating insight from multiple sources of data; • Integrating new sources of qualitative information to provide social intelligence and insight into lived experience, awareness and attitude;
- Using predictive analytics to gain forward-looking insight and support investment decisions and assess likely changes to patterns of demand

The following quotes from commissioners and operational managers illustrate the criticality of developing this capability:

‘If we don’t innovate service provision soon the budget pressure will kill us’

‘The shift needs to be more demand management, demography and thinking forward’

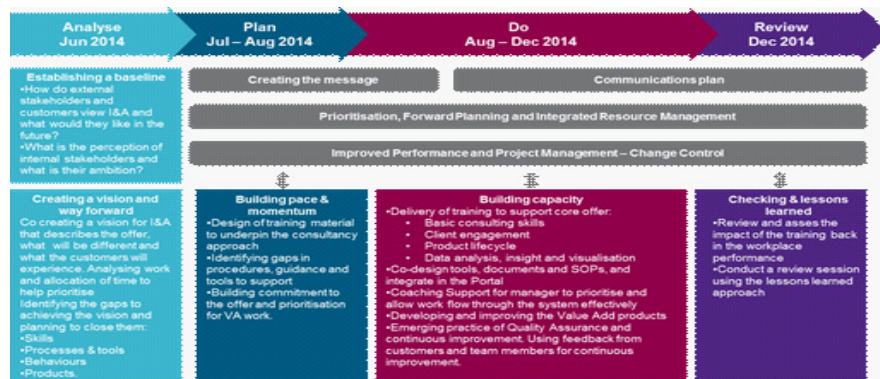
‘To provide strategic insight to inform how the service maybe provided differently in the future’

Alexander and Capita were asked to facilitate the I&A team through a programme of organisational development to:

- Review and develop key data sources, analytical approaches and methodologies to enable and support delivery of the Insight & Analytics ‘offer’
- Update and design associated tools and documentation to assure quality, reliability and consistency in service delivery
- Design and deliver bespoke training materials to shape thinking and behaviours of Insight & Analytics team members, transfer skills and knowledge and embed new methodology and approaches
- Facilitate training delivery and coaching to support adoption of new approaches quickly and confidently

What we did

Our approach to working with I&A managers and officers is illustrated in the diagram below:



Analyse – this phase started with creating shared understanding and clarity around the purpose of I&A, how they add value through the products they offer and how customers ‘pull’ service through their commissioning cycle.

To do this, we worked with the team to develop their ‘vision’ that was informed through a series of structured interviews with key stakeholders. The vision – ‘Delivering ground breaking insight and analysis to enable community’s to achieve better outcomes’ – and a high level proposition – see Figure 1 below – were the principal outputs of this work.

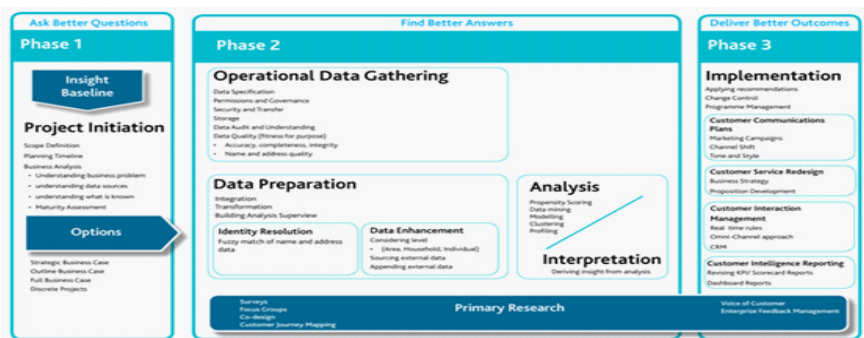
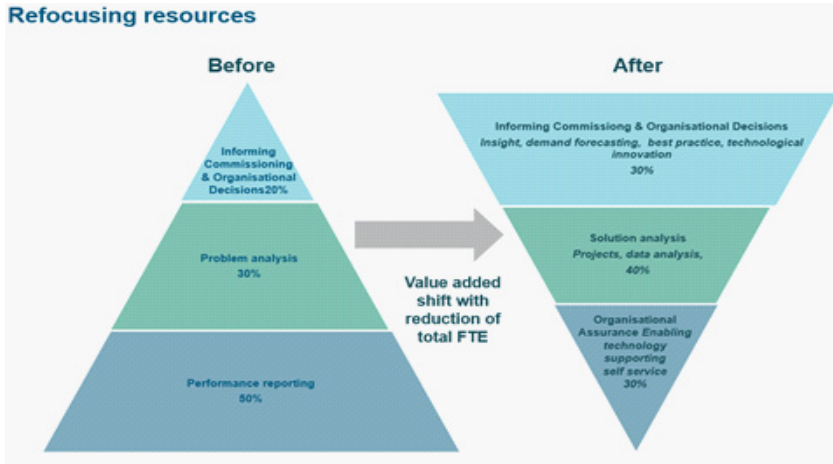


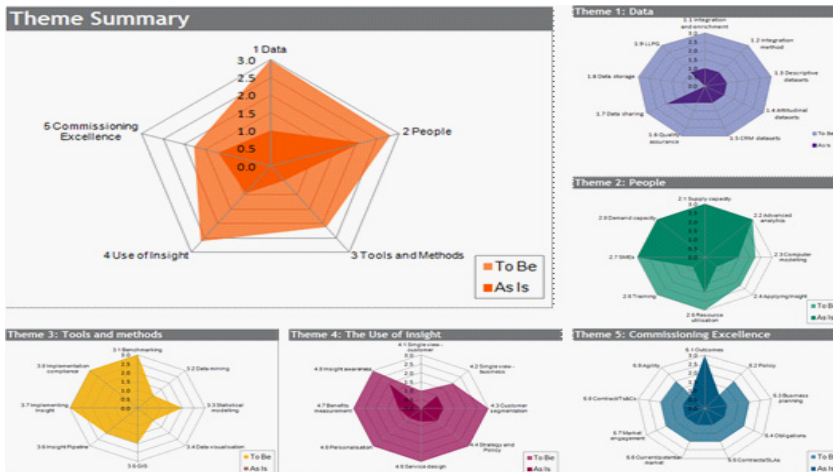
Figure 1 - I&A Proposition

Through sharing the ‘vision’ with stakeholders and commissioners, we were able to influence some reallocation of resources to focus more on providing more insight to inform long-term commissioning and organisational design decisions.



Then, to develop understanding of current capability for delivering the proposition, we worked with the 37 I&A managers and officers to complete baseline assessments of skills, knowledge and capability for delivering the proposition alongside an assessment of the maturity or fitness for purpose of methodology and tools used by the team.

Breaking this into themes of Data; People; Tools and Methods; Use of Insight and Commissioning Excellence enabled us to identify key gaps and, thereby, prioritise development around training requirements and the need for improved methodology and tools.



Plan – the next phase of work included development of ‘quick wins’ such as ‘fast start packs’ to help customers understand how I&A products / services could help them in gaining deeper insight and understanding and improve decision making.

Typical Client Situation

- Segmentation of our population or service locations/users
- Adding value to analysis through obtaining further insight on customers and their behaviours
- Using cluster-factor analysis techniques to create targeted clusters of our customer internally

Business Outcomes

Evidence based customer insight
Communication channels for target audiences

Segmentation of Essex population into key service groups/users. Tailored campaigns for customer signposts

Cost / Timescales

Cost per service (annual), visit costs
Typically 1 person / 1-2 weeks

Solution Overview

Several existing tools can provide additional intelligence for ad hoc projects

Project's Message is of historical trend - this clusters the UK population into 15 different groups (and 50 sub types). ACORN is an alternative customer profiling tool. It has 5 groups (10 sub-type)

Cluster analysis, a statistical technique, can also be explored internally to create bespoke clusters depending on the data we hold internally. This can help create clusters of our residents based on the nature of the service they are receiving

Where postcode data is available, there is potential to allow Mosaic/ACORN. Cluster analysis can be completed externally if sufficient samples of data is available with demographic traits captured

Deliverables

Provision of key clusters specific to customer requirements (ie 'target audience')

Provision of communication preferences for efficient targeted approach

Typical follow on activity

Geographic analysis
Geographically weighted regression
Targeted campaigns

Variations

- Mosaic - household level (Essex County Council only)
- Acorn - postcode level (includes Southern & Thurrock)
- Both locally overlap
- Historical externally retained segmentation (letter of whole population or service users, specific, cultural)

Topics included clustering/ segmentation; PNA; geographic analysis and thought leadership.

Alexander is an independent change management consultancy that specialises in strategy alignment, performance management and improvement. For further information please contact us on 023 8022 5520 or email maddie.potter@alexander-ecc.co.uk

We also designed a series of bespoke training workshops to meet immediate needs and provide a legacy for induction of new team members.

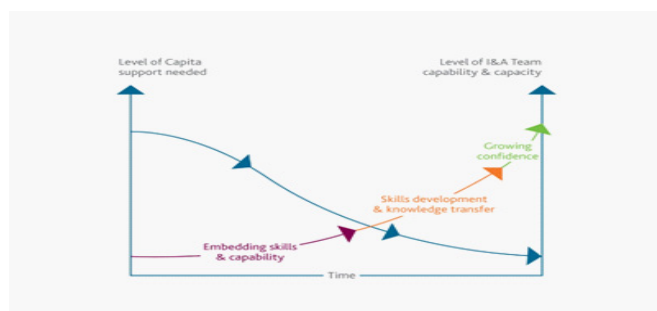
The workshops explored – from several perspectives – a standard consulting ‘life cycle’ and introduced attendees to related methodologies and tools. Facilitated by subject matter experts, attendees practised using the tools in practical situations – building awareness, understanding and confidence around:

- Data analysis, insight and visualisation
- Basic consulting skills
- Client engagement and relationship management
- Managing the Activity life cycle



To augment the training, four I&A managers were coached to support their team members in implementing new ways of thinking and acting – using existing and new tools – and drive transformation through their leadership, modelling of desired behaviours and firm performance management.

Do – this phase comprised delivery of training and follow up through coaching in use of new tools. This supported the embedding of skills and development of knowledge through practice – leading to increased confidence amongst I&A managers and staff and reduced levels of support from Capita and Alexander people.



What we achieved:

Benefits so far

From the customers' perspective	From the organisation's perspective	From the I&A teams perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better experience and outputs: • Involvement through co-production • Focus on analysis with value added insight and direction for improved decision making • Adoption of 'check and challenge' process universally accepted as principal method of scoping and kicking off projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency and effectiveness – better insight through reallocation of resource releasing £100k • Reduction in rework through more effective scoping • Improved visualisation of analysis and more concise recommendations and conclusions – Better 'so what's' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence and morale – in most recent staff survey the I&A recorded the highest improvement in morale across the council • Increased capacity through better collaborative working

The Review phase comprised evaluation of the work done from three perspectives:

The review showed that customers had benefitted through better experience and outputs, including:

- Involvement through co-production.
- Focus on analysis with value added insight and direction for improved decision making.
- Adoption of 'check and challenge' process universally accepted as principal method of scoping and kicking off projects.

From the broader ECC perspective, benefits included:

- Efficiency and effectiveness – better insight through reallocation of resource releasing £100k.
- Reduction in rework through more effective scoping.
- Improved visualisation of analysis and more concise recommendations and conclusions – better 'so what's'?

I&A team members – individually and collectively – had benefitted through:

- Increased confidence and morale – evidenced by an ECC-wide staff engagement survey showing that I&A had recorded the largest improvement in morale across the council.
- Increased capacity through more effective collaborative working with colleagues and customers.

Alexander People - what we believe

Alexander people are business people who are passionate about public services. We take what's good from the private sector and shape it to meet the demands and challenges of public service. So when we look at the world and see what's wrong, our instinct is not to complain about it, it's to do something about it. This means that, when we look at our own company, we don't just look at its performance as a business; we look at the difference we make to changing public services and society for the better.

The people who manage and deliver public services today face huge challenges. They deserve someone to think with and people who can help to do the things they haven't the capacity to do themselves.

That's why we **engage** and connect with the people at all levels in public services who face these challenges.

Then we help them **challenge** the way things are.

So that they can deliver real **change** for the better.

That's what we do: **Engage. Challenge. Change.**

There's a belief that, without a profit motive, there isn't enough to drive public services to be better. We say that the stakes couldn't be higher. For people who work in and with public services, if we fail, society fails. We believe this is the most powerful driver there is.

Alexander People - what we do

Knowing where to go and how to get there

- Strategic & organisational review and diagnosis
- Shared vision
- Transformation strategy
- Transformation blueprint
- Stakeholder engagement
- Change readiness
- Communications

Delivering customer value with less resources

- Lean Systems Thinking
- Service transformation, design and improvement
- Shared services
- Function and service reviews
- Options appraisals and business case development

Enabling change to happen

- Programme and project management
- Change Management and benefits realisation
- Building capacity to change
- Skills and knowledge transfer

Making change sustainable

- Leadership development
- Management development
- Continuous improvement strategy and culture
- Skills and knowledge transfer

We work with...

Alexander works with people & organisations in the public sector, including:

- District Councils
- Unitary Authorities
- County Councils
- Housing Associations
- Police Services
- Health Services

If you'd like to talk about how we can help you, call us on 023 8022 5520.

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