How London Borough of Harrow Council transformed their IT service

Please note: Kerv Consult was recently rebranded from Monochrome Consultancy when it joined the Kerv Group. This project was delivered at a point when the team was known as Monochrome Consultancy.

The Challenge

Customer Overview

London Borough of Harrow Council (Harrow) provides services to approximately a quarter of a million citizens. The Harrow team had a clear goal; increasing autonomy over their services in order to strengthen and modernise delivery to their customers.

A London Borough Council wanted to transform the way they work by insourcing key elements of their outsourced IT service and implementing a Service Integration and Management (SIAM) delivery model to improve delivery.

Background and Context

As part of a wider programme of IT transformation initiatives in 2020, Harrow decided to transition to a SIAM delivery model and in-source a number of capabilities in order to have greater control of their services.

In Q2 2020, Harrow gained a new IT Director, Ben Goward, who understood the benefit of transforming the Service. Ben set the team the challenge of implementing the new operating model before November 2020, when the outsourced agreement was due for renewal. This bold decision to transform within 6 months rather than extend the existing contract for a year, set the pace and context for delivery.

Kerv Consult was engaged to design some key elements of the service, such as processes to underpin the operating model, to 'be the glue' and 'protect the service', highlighting any gaps and to ensure that the elements of the complex new SIAM worked together. We were also selected to manage the transition of the most directly customer-facing services of End-User Computing (EUC) and the Service Desk.

It became clear early in the project scope that more extensive work was needed than originally foreseen. This additional work would be required to be completed within the remaining five months to achieve a successful go-live. As part of our analysis, we highlighted additional activities required to structure and stand up the services, both in-house and those with suppliers. This meant extensive planning and focus on the goal if it was to be achieved, however, by identifying these areas as early as possible, we ensured there was time to address gaps and protect the service.
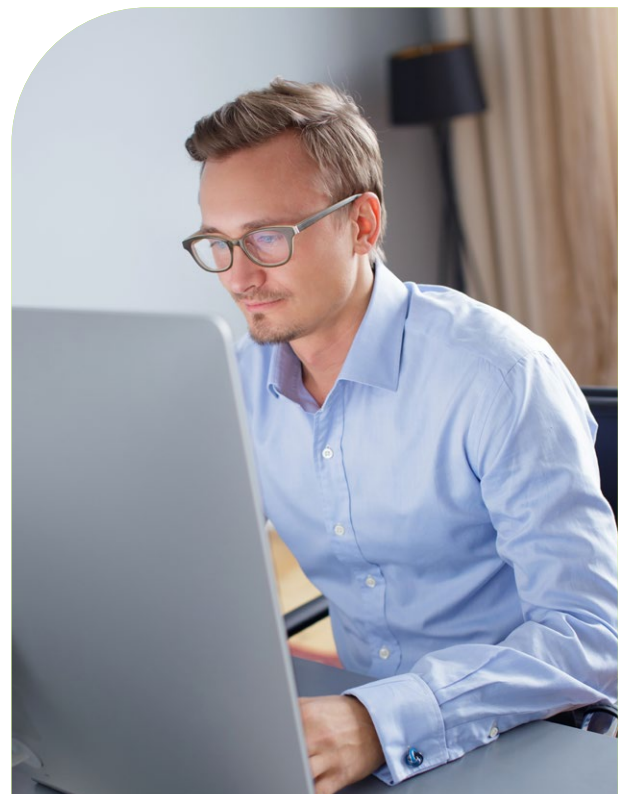
The Solution

Whilst Kerv Consult was originally brought in with a specific focus, our team and Harrow quickly developed mutual trust and a strong collaborative relationship. This trust led to Harrow extending the scope of activity that Kerv Consult was asked to deliver and we took a more central role in the transformation.

The ultimate aim became for Kerv Consult to ensure a complete set of fully operational IT services on day one. Specific areas of focus to ensure successful delivery were Service Desk capability and knowledge, Desktop Support transition, supplier integration and engraining ITIL process knowledge throughout the teams. These deliverables, along with the new ITSM solution, would form the backbone of the new service and, ultimately, were the areas on which the success of the project would be assessed.

Kerv Consult managed a large variety of stakeholders, suppliers and members of the Harrow team to ensure that the service we designed was embedded into operations and that testing was fully completed. The team also supported Harrow with SME input into the delivery of their new ITSM solution, ServiceNow (where we once again collaborated with Unifii).

We worked collaboratively, ticking off all of the specific deliverables we had committed to, but recognised that we could support Harrow above this and so worked to take additional ownership for some other areas such as operational readiness testing.

This project could have easily not run this smoothly. A key element to avoiding unforeseen issues at go-live was an absolute focus on operational readiness. We approached testing in 2 ways, bringing best practice to develop a generic test plan, but then identifying specific areas of risk through analysis of ticket data from the six months prior to this transition.

The project team identified three key areas in which the new organisation had to be prepared: access, capability and knowledge. There was a strong emphasis in the weeks approaching go-live on ensuring that all teams validated their ability to deliver services to customers. Through stringent operational readiness checks, any risks were highlighted, or mitigated, and the goal of readiness for day one was achieved, with the fall-back of a "minimum viable product" being greatly surpassed.

Unexpected Events

Entirely unexpectedly, 2 weeks before the service was due to go-live, the outsourced service provider who supported the previous service was hit with a ransomware attack. This meant that the service which Harrow was receiving was heavily impacted. We discussed and agreed to launch the new Service Desk early and set a range of the new service towers live. This ordinarily would not have been advised, but due to the robust testing of the newly designed operation, we launched early, allowing critical parts of the service to be restored to end users.

> **When the incumbent supplier was compromised our users really felt impact of the reduction in support. The decision to take an early cutover was unanimous amongst all involved as users could only benefit.**
>
> **Working with the Harrow ICT team and all our suppliers, the Kerv Consult (previously Monochrome) team efficiently helped guide the new service into an early start. Their positive attitude was crucial to the early success and resulted in happy users from day one."**
>
> **Ian McArdle**
> Transformation Programme Manager

The actual cutover was quiet and uneventful. As the Service Desk had already cutover early in order to support business-critical needs, the rest of the transition went seamlessly. When the formal go-live day arrived the following week, the remaining suppliers and towers were ready to go, all resolver groups were working and, most importantly, users were noticing improvements. This successful transition was further reinforced through positive customer feedback.

Another sign of success was the shift in focus to service improvement within the first week of live operations. Tweaks and changes are likely to be required following any major transition but the Harrow team were so comfortable with the cutover that Ben wanted the team to start looking at Continuous Service Improvement (CSI) almost immediately. For the most part, any "issues" that were filtering through from users and resolvers alike were not real issues, instead were small improvements that Harrow could begin to work on as part of CSI. This was impressive to see after such a long and complex project.

The success of the project is in the team collaboration, not only across multiple organisations but also from multiple geographies to ensure a successful end to a challenging, yet extremely enjoyable, piece of work.

> **Kerv Consult (previously Monochrome) staff understood and embodied the culture change needed to make this happen – staff from separate organisations were coming together to form a new team where the customer was put first and we encouraged positive teamwork and fun."**
>
> **Ben Goward**
> IT Director

The Benefits

The most obvious, beneficial outcome is the move to IT being managed in-house. This successful transition was underpinned by a new ITSM tool and a clear operating model outlining each team's roles and responsibilities. Several ITIL processes are now being run by Harrow in a more streamlined, efficient manner – the impact of which is evident in the positive customer feedback received so far.

With the Service Desk being the front line of the newly formed organisation, Kerv Consult dedicated much time and effort to ensuring that this team had all the tools and skills required to hit the ground running. This hard work paid off at go-live when the team processed an increased number of tickets than received by their predecessor within the same period. This was likely due to the accessibility of the new service portal which, in itself, marks a notable improvement in the service offering. The team excelled, working cohesively with their new colleagues both internally and externally, and, contributing heavily to the favourable feedback received by customers.

We tried to quantify some of the tangible benefits, to demonstrate the value for Harrow. SLA performance was great but above that, within the first 2 weeks First Time Fix (FTF) was up at almost 60%, Major Incident rate was down, positive CSAT was 89.9% and there were 0 complaints. The MI and reporting evidenced a glowing success.

Another key change post-transition has been the introduction of the self-service portal and 30% of incidents and 60% of requests are now raised this way. Tickets via email are now a thing of the past and this introduces significant benefits through more controlled ticket management system and the user visibility of real-time updates on their tickets through the portal. Requests raised using templated forms now go directly to the correct teams with automated tasks to speed up processing times. This has all contributed to a smoother service and a much-improved customer experience.

We laid solid foundations for the Service Management team to ensure that these new ways of working could be maintained, as they move forward into 2021. Kerv Consult ensured this by not just designing but truly embedding the operational best practice which was embraced by Harrow. It was encouraging to see the enthusiasm with which the new ways of working were received and the positivity with which the team view the "new world".

Cultural change is a key part for any transformation. There was a combination of strong top-down leadership from Harrow driving the user-first culture and bottom up Business Change from Kerv Consult. We were able to employ techniques such as engagement meetings, clear processes, user guide materials and robust knowledge to ensure the team could embrace the new ways of working but also know where to reference it when needed.

> " The close collaboration between Harrow and Kerv Consult (previously Monochrome) turned the vision into a reality and a successful one at that."

Catherine Little
Head of Service Operations

The Future

Kerv Consult has been requested to provide some further Service Operations consultancy beyond this project which will focus on continued operational excellence. Additionally, a detailed Service Improvement roadmap was developed by Kerv Consult over the course the project will help Harrow drive further integration of teams and increased automation across all services.

Harrow and Kerv Consult have developed a great working relationship over the past few months and we are now considered an extension of the team. We are very much looking forward to growing this partnership and helping Harrow achieve their goals across other projects as they move into the future.

2022 Update

Harrow Council released their own video Case Study talking about the benefits of the transformation 18 months after the launch. This was not commissioned by Kerv Consult, but filmed in partnership with Version 1, the cloud partner during the project described above.

We are delighted to share this as it shows the lasting effects of the change, in the customer's own words...

▶ Watch video

BEN GOWARD
Director of Information Communication Technology, **Harrow Council**

Get in touch with us

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