

case study

Allerdale is a non-metropolitan district of Cumbria, England, with borough status. Its council is based in Workington and the borough has a population of over 94,000 residents.



The Borough of Allerdale was formed under the Local Government Act 1972, on 1 April 1974 by the merger of the municipal borough of Workington, the urban districts of Maryport, Cockermouth and Keswick; and the rural districts of Cockermouth and Wigton, all of which were within the administrative county of Cumberland. In 1995 Allerdale was granted borough status.

What is My Council Services?

My Council Services (MCS) provides public sector organisations with a fully digital enterprise application that starts with web and native smartphone self-service customer access and extends to field mobile working. In between are a number of generic line-of-business modules and tools tailored specifically to local authority needs.

The MCS platform is unique. It is the only fully synchronised, dynamically configurable and integrated multi-channel customer self-service platform.

The combination of innovative, cost-effective technology delivered flexibly and with made-to-measure professional services ensures clients realise rapid returns on their investments.

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Strategic objectives of Allerdale Borough Council

Allerdale Borough Council delivers hundreds of services to residents, businesses and visitors every day of the year. One of its key priorities, as laid out in its strategic plan is:

'[to] become a more sustainable business by reviewing and improving the way it provides services, improving its procurement practices, and becoming more efficient and effective through the investment in ICT. It will continue to provide the high quality front-line services which residents and visitors expect.'

Paul Wood, Allerdale's Head of Customer Transformation and Commissioning says 'in support of the council plan it was essential that we saved money but at the same time the requirement to achieve service improvement was non-negotiable.'

It was this requirement to achieve significant cash savings whilst also delivering measurable service improvement that drove Allerdale to look for ways in which IT could help.

Key objectives of the My Council Services implementation at Allerdale Council

In common with many other local government organisations, Allerdale Borough Council wanted to improve the delivery of its services, efficiently and cost-effectively. In particular its objectives were to:-

- **Ensure service accessibility**
Allerdale wanted to use a multi-channel communication approach to ensure that the full range of its services was accessible to all residents and citizens, regardless of geographic location or physical circumstances.
- **Streamline customer contact and engagement**
Allerdale wanted to use dynamically developed eforms made available via its website as well as an Allerdale-branded mobile app in order to make customer communications more efficient.
- **Update the existing customer services contact application**
The existing contact application was dated, cumbersome to use and no longer held sufficiently accurate and up-to-date customer information.
- **Reduce paper-based processes**
A key driver was the desire to replace slow paper-based working processes that were difficult to monitor and report against with more efficient automated processes.
- **Embrace mobile technology**
Allerdale wanted to embrace mobile working, both with its own staff and also with third party contractors. Devastating flooding in 2016 had shown how much the ability to use mobile communication channels flexibly could help the Council not only to save money but, more importantly, to respond more effectively to unforeseen events.
- **Reduce digital infrastructure and its associated costs**
The overarching aim was to achieve all of the above using a secure externally-hosted cloud-based solution, thus reducing the support and infrastructure burden on the Allerdale IT department.

Allerdale Borough Council embarked on a series of transformational activities leveraging the suite of My Council Services technologies to help it achieve these objectives.

'We planned to invest financial resource into improving our digital capability, so we had to ensure that the system purchased was appropriately developed and configured exactly to our needs.'

Selecting the right partner was critical. We had knowledge of Abavus, and knew that its system was right for us, not just now but also moving forward as we continue to expand its footprint across the Council.

Our subsequent experience throughout the implementation phases and since go live has been first class and we could not have asked for any more from a technology vendor.'

Paul Wood, Head of Customer Transformation and Commissioning

The project launch

'In August 2016 Allerdale began a pilot project by rolling out My Council Services solutions across three key areas: the Street Scene team, the Customer Services department, as well as all third party contractors.'

Immediate benefits

Key processes fully automated from end-to-end

'There were numerous immediate benefits realised through the deployment of the business processes underpinned by the new technology. Critical to the success of this project was having the ability to fully automate these processes fully end-to-end'

Tiffanie Blair, Business Analyst

Improved customer experience

'We spent time during the implementation phase building processes that were fully automated end to end. This meant that staff could focus on doing work that was important and not simply urgent. But this was only achieved because the underpinning processes that sat on the technology actually improved the customer experience and customer journey.'

'Feedback from the previous system wasn't great and customers would not know if reports had been completed. In contrast, the new system sends customers an automatic notification as soon as the job is finished. It's more efficient for us and provides a better service to our customers.'

Tiffanie Blair, Business Analyst

Working smarter with third party contractors

'Third party contractors deliver a range of services on behalf of the Council, including the removal of litter and animal waste. Under the old working methods some jobs could take an extended period of time to be handled between the citizen, council and contractor. Using the My Council Services technology means that the time taken from a customer reporting an issue to it being deployed to a contractor for action is reduced to minutes.'

Tiffanie Blair, Business Analyst

Creating a mobile workforce

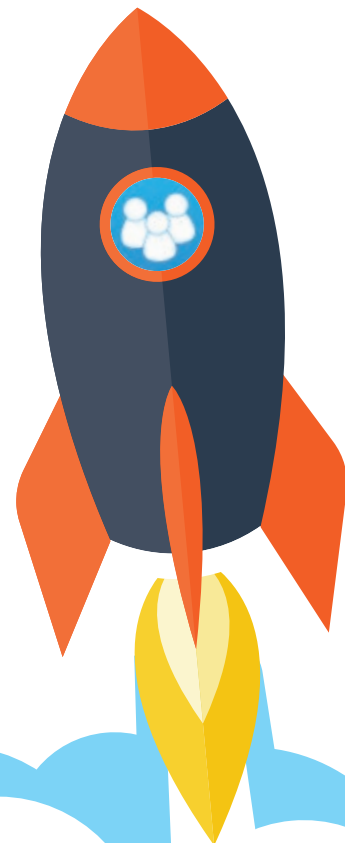
'Previous attempts to take the Allerdale workforce mobile had not been successful. Now, My Council Services technology along with effective business process reengineering means that we have been able to successfully achieve this objective.'

Tiffanie Blair, Business Analyst

Working with Abavus

'Working with Abavus since commencing the project has been a very positive experience. The Abavus team have worked with us throughout the initial project phases to ensure that we met our objectives, and continue to do so as we embark on phase 2 of the project. I and my colleagues thoroughly enjoy working with Abavus team.'

Tiffanie Blair, Business Analyst



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The next steps

Based on the success achieved during the initial phase of the project, Allerdale has already started planning and re-engineering the Council processes which will form part of delivery of the next phase of the project.

Future plans include:

Driving adoption of online systems

With confidence in the system across the Council continuing to grow, and with more services coming online, the Council intends to switch from growing its digital customer user base organically to being more proactive in driving online and mobile adoption.

The aim is not to increase demand for already busy services, but to encourage citizens to transact with their Council using more customer-friendly and cost effective channels. The transition of simple transactions to online services frees up time to allow customer services to deal with more complex customer enquiries in person.

Taking payments online

The forms that Allerdale currently uses to take payments are complex and not user-friendly. Thus Allerdale has redesigned its payment forms using My Council Services forms and payment plugins, and will be deploying this capability shortly. This will take a significant volume of payment transactions away from the contact centre and other internal departments.

Managing Freedom of Information Requests (FOIA)

Managing FOIA requests has become a labour intensive undertaking for the Council. Using My Council Services' case management functionality, Allerdale is seeking to reduce FOIA handling times and better manage the whole FOIA processes.

About Abavus Ltd and My Council Services

Abavus is a partner to iTouch Vision and the exclusive certified partner for My Council Services.

Over the last 5 years Abavus has been involved with the implementation and set up of IT platforms. iTouch Vision is a leading innovator in the development of technology applications focused on increasing efficiency and improving the customer experience for both public sector and commercial organisations. My Council Services is the flagship of its current development activity.



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For more information about My Council Services and to book your free demo:

Visit www.abavus.co.uk
Email info@abavus.co.uk
Call 020 8530 2505