

The Parole Board and CoreAzure: Unified Platform for future change

Background

The Parole Board is an independent arm's length body of the Ministry of Justice. Its mission is to work with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk-assessing prisoners to decide whether they can be safely released into the community.

The Parole Board has approximately 250 members who carry out parole risk assessments. The Parole Board members are publicly appointed by the Secretary of State and its Secretariat (150 staff circa.) support the membership in their work conducting parole reviews.

The Aim

To achieve the real improvement of services along digital lines, as outlined in the Parole Board's 2020 strategy, would require fundamental changes to the way IT services were organised and delivered. A key focus of their 2017/18 digital programme was increased collaboration between staff, members and stakeholders and, given a background of growing public scrutiny, increased transparency of both information and decision-making processes throughout the organisation.



Fundamental changes to the way IT services were organised and delivered

The Challenge

In the process of disaggregating from the incumbent Ministry of Justice IT provider, the Parole Board had to rapidly establish a platform capable of supporting current operations and was fit for purpose moving forward.

Although under the Ministry of Justice tenancy, Office365 had been used by the Members for some time, the Parole Board were unclear of the ways in which the capabilities could respond to the issues they faced and more importantly were unsure of how best to deploy and exploit in the context of a broader infrastructure modernisation programme.

Specific Pain Points

Difficulty and complexity around:



Search and content creation



Case work retrieval and dissemination of decision documents and case guidance



Document location, controls and maintenance of audit trails

From a technology perspective:



Legacy architecture impacting connectivity, reliability and speed

Resulting in:



Lost time due to the slowness of IT platforms and applications



Key services not being fully monitored and aligned to new GDPR requirements

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The Solution

Initially CoreAzure delivered a short consultancy engagement, designed to assist the Parole Board understand, introduce and exploit the Office 365 platform to meet its ambitious 'Digital' objectives agenda and to empower both members and staff.

CoreAzure was subsequently contracted to complete the design and implementation of both the new Office 365 platform, together with the supporting core infrastructure built around Microsoft Azure.

This entailed:



Deploying Office 365
Productivity applications to enhance collaboration, information sharing and reduce data duplication



Implement SharePoint Online:
Enhance information handling and processing capabilities and supporting the MoJ GDPR programme



Managed Service:
Bridging the gap between the current capacity demand for high-performance business technology platform



Hardware refresh:
Introducing capable hardware that, in conjunction with a new Windows 10 build, helped users exploit the new capabilities.



Telephony:
Utilise Skype for Business

Results



8 months on, the engagement began by consulting with staff, members and key stakeholders to design a solution and set of services that addressed a range of operational issues and an aggressive transformational agenda: the project eventually saw the creation of an Azure and 365-based information platform.

CoreAzure now run a fully Managed Service of the Parole Board's Office 365 and Microsoft Azure platform, including 24/7 support, a dedicated service delivery manager and

service desk, and working with leading experts in the Microsoft Cloud Platform and ITIL to provide a pragmatic IT Service Management Approach.

This example highlights how contractual disaggregation can be used opportunistically to re-shape infrastructure provision and through the exploitation of the Microsoft Cloud can form the basis of a forward-looking transformation agenda.

"By using their experience and expertise CoreAzure has helped us understand how to maximise the benefits from our Microsoft cloud platform to support our digital transformation agenda. The contractual disaggregation has been complex, and the timescales were challenging, however CoreAzure has quickly established and helped us transition to the Microsoft cloud platform without impact to our service"

Rebecca Bailey, Head of Transformation at the Parole Board

"We are already making improvements to our operations and have plans in place to enhance our public facing information services, all made possible by our new Microsoft Cloud platform capability"

Faith Geary, Director Parole Board, Development & Improvement



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