



Evidence Based Improvement

From Possibility...

Evidence-based practice is a well understood concept in the National Probation Service. The aims of the service are wide-ranging, but a core part of their work involves helping offenders to tackle problems which lead to offending behaviour. Offender Managers conduct a structured interview, collect and analyse data and develop a tailored plan for improvement, based on this “**evidence**”.

The principles are exactly the same when we look at any improvement process in an organisation, which generally follows these steps:

- Collect some data / evidence regarding current problems
- Agree what improvements you are trying to achieve
- Use the analysis to decide on a solution
- Implement solutions
- Review

The problem we see with most “**improvements**” is that people and organisations tend to jump to the “**solution**” stage without necessarily conducting the right analysis of the problem, or having the data or evidence to back up decisions.

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EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

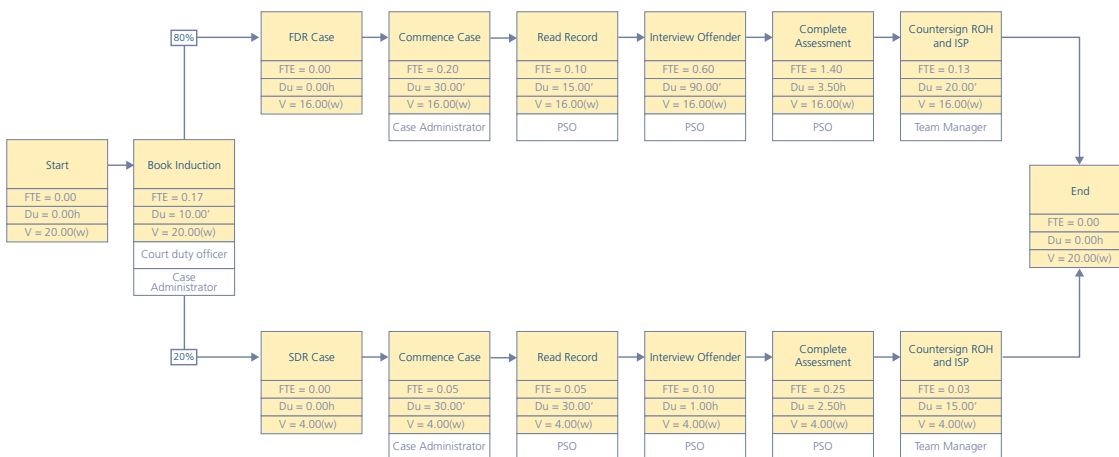


One of our clients, West Yorkshire Probation Area, used a very evidence-based approach to move a specific problem forward. West Yorkshire Probation Area is one of the top-performing Probation Areas in England and Wales, and embarked on a planned journey to Excellence over five years ago.

As a previous award recipient of Yorkshire Excellence, they have trained managers and staff in process improvement, problem solving, project management and the EFQM Excellence Model, and applied these tools to many different improvement projects over the past five years. In 2005 they decided to make their process improvement approaches easier, faster and more evidence-based by using Control-ES Software as an analysis and scenario planning tool.

One of West Yorkshire's Middle Managers, Janine Burns had recently attended a process improvement course and been trained in using "control" process software. Within the district she works, one of the teams had a specific problem as there had been a surge in workload (from 15 cases to 20 cases per week) which had put pressure on resources. A familiar cry of "we need more staff" had been met by a familiar response! The methodology and software enabled her to map the current process

Note: The data shown on the map below is an example of the functionality and should not be taken to represent actual values



Once the process was mapped, the team conducted a cycle-time analysis to capture how long each step took to complete.

The control software enabled Janine to feed in activity times and roles of staff involved, and calculate the "full time equivalents" required to perform a set of tasks with current and future volumes established. The software also has the capacity to calculate the cost of individual activity steps.

To Actuality...

Once this model was in place, Janine was able to use the software to create a number of “scenarios”. The scenarios looked at different volumes of cases moving through the process and showed clearly how many full time equivalents were needed to cope with predicted volumes. Armed with this factual data, the decision-making process regarding resource allocation was informed by clear evidence.

Janine found the software enabled them to:

- Rapidly capture current processes
- Highlight where cost and time is high in processes (and consider how to reduce)
- Quickly produce unit costs
- Accurately identify what “full time equivalent” resource is needed to perform certain tasks

Janine commented:

“The software is simple to learn to use, shows process steps clearly and makes the task of measuring the impact of process or volume changes straightforward; vitally important when considering the need for focus on efficient activity.”

Clearly this ability is essential for any organisation serious about improving performance and achieving Excellence. With so many Public Sector organisations needing to re-design and improve services, improve performance, reduce costs and in many cases “**compete**” for future work under the contestability agenda, the need for fast and effective “**evidence-based**” improvement has never been greater.

Lorraine Mackin, Director of Ad Esse Consulting has been working with the Area and commented:

“We’re confident that West Yorkshire Probation Area will continue to improve the lives of Offenders, Victims and the Community of West Yorkshire at the same time as continuously improving the way they deliver services. It’s a pleasure working with such a committed group of staff and managers and a great buzz to think you might have played a part in helping them to develop their continuous improvement skills further, as their work is vital in reducing offending”.

For more information contact Lorraine Mackin at Ad Esse Consulting on 0784 338 7279, or Janine Burns on 01484 826100.



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Control-ES from Nimbus Partners enables organisations to capture, analyse and communicate a common set of processes that can be used to manage and transform your business. It can be used to support a range of projects from process improvement to compliance.

Key steps and benefits in implementing control-ES include:

- **CAPTURE**

use in live workshops to capture processes and information easily and surprisingly quickly

- **ANALYSE**

analyse and measure processes to manage initiatives such as business transformation, performance management or business continuity

- **COMMUNICATE**

enable the whole organisation to review, improve and apply processes and supporting information dynamically, on the desktop

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