

Elmbridge BC Printroom



From Possibility...

Elmbridge Borough Council has undertaken value for money reviews of all of its services over recent years. The Print Room was the subject of a value for money review in 2008/09. The review made a number of recommendations including:

- Review the charging policy for the Print Room
- Reduce the Council's expenditure on external printing by doing more work in house
- Review the processes in the Print Room, including looking at automation and business process re-engineering
- Explore the prospects for the Elmbridge Print Room to undertake printing work for other councils.

Ad Esse Consulting was commissioned by the Council to support a review of Print Room processes.

OUR APPROACH

We did the review in three stages:

- A diagnostic phase where we observed current ways of working in the print room, analysed existing data and interviewed service staff and managers
- A two-day rapid improvement workshop with the Print Room staff and managers to:
 - Analyse current processes in the print room
 - Identify concerns arising from the processes
 - Prepared an action plan for print room staff and managers to introduce changes to address the concerns
- A one-day follow up session to review progress since the workshop and to identify further action to be taken.



DIAGNOSIS

The Elmbridge Borough Council Print Room occupies a large space on the basement floor of the Civic Centre. It is accessed by double doors to the loading area so that paper and machinery can easily be delivered in bulk. The Print Room is part of the Corporate Policy and Partnerships Division within the Chief Executives Directorate. It is staffed by three full time staff: a Print Room manager and two reprographic officers. All three are trained printers.



The Print Room provides two-colour offset litho printing, photocopying in black & white and colour, a range of finishing services (binding, folding, hole-punching, laminating etc) and the production of print-ready artwork using desktop publishing software. A large part of the work of the team, and its highest priority, is the production of agendas and supporting papers for the council and its committees; other regular work includes printing of individualised council tax bills, invoices and housing benefit notification letters, the electoral registration register, business stationery, leaflets and the council's internal newsletter.

The machinery in the Print Room includes two high volume black and white photocopiers, a colour photocopier, a further dedicated copier for mail-merge work using the laser serve system, one two colour litho press. In addition to these machines that are used regularly there are also two machines a single colour litho press and a further photocopier that are rarely used and due to be removed.

The Print Room carries out four main processes:

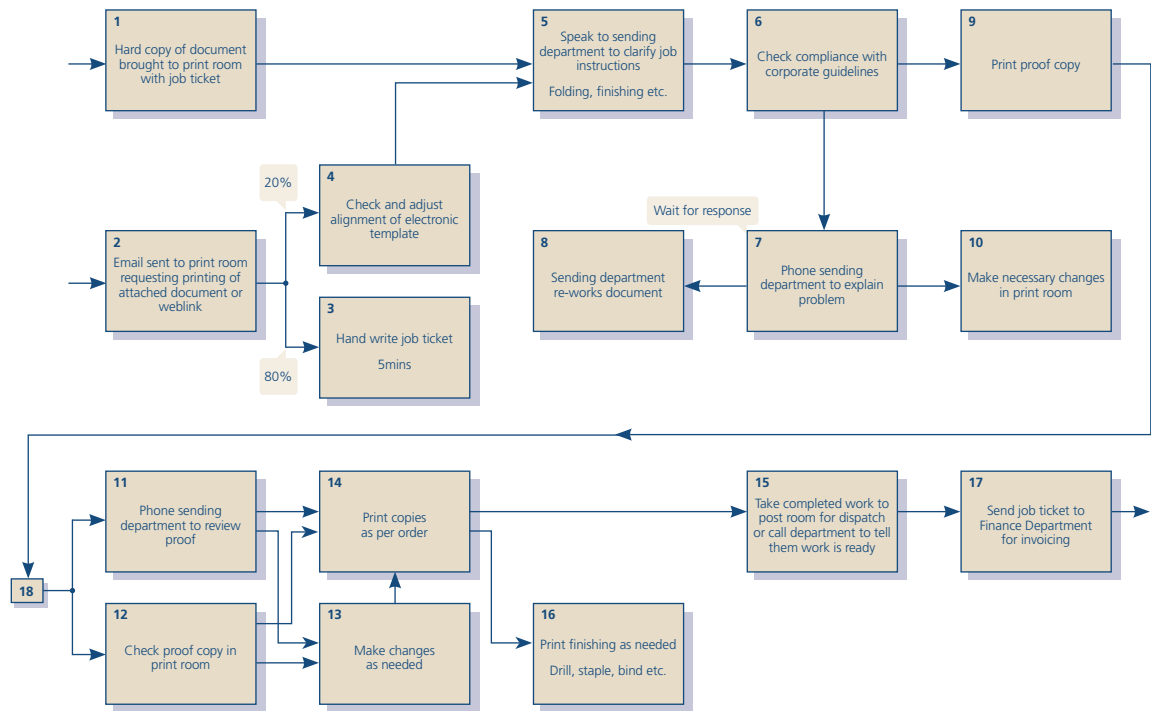
- Offset litho printing of standard council documents, letterheads, forms etc
- Bulk photocopying including the printing and collating reports and agendas for council and its committees; also colour photocopying of leaflets, posters etc
- Printing laser serve, 'mail merge' documents – the bulk production of letters and invoices etc addressed to specific people with housing benefit allocations, council tax bills, invoices etc
- Photocopier maintenance, the staff members of the print room act as 'first point of call' in response to problems arising with the photocopiers that are located in council departments; they carry out minor repairs and maintain supplies of toner and paper.

In addition to this the Print Room provides a range of print finishing services and advises council staff on printing issues and design issues related to the corporate branding guidelines. They also oversee the commissioning of printing work from outside suppliers.

The diagnostic stage identified several issues, including:

- Much of the work that is sent to the Print Room lacks clear instructions, particularly for finishing requirements
- A significant proportion of work submitted does not comply with corporate branding guidelines
- The work of the team is often interrupted by people using the Print Room as an entrance to the building, by people bringing work in at all times of day and by telephone calls
- The capacity is underused
- Capacity to reorganise space in the print room and store room to improve workflow
- Work that is sent for printing is then taken back to departments to be put in envelopes before returning to the Mail Room (next door to the print room) for despatch
- There is little accurate data of daily workflow and volumes of work undertaken
- The system of charging does not reflect the full cost of doing the work.

RAPID IMPROVEMENT WORKSHOP



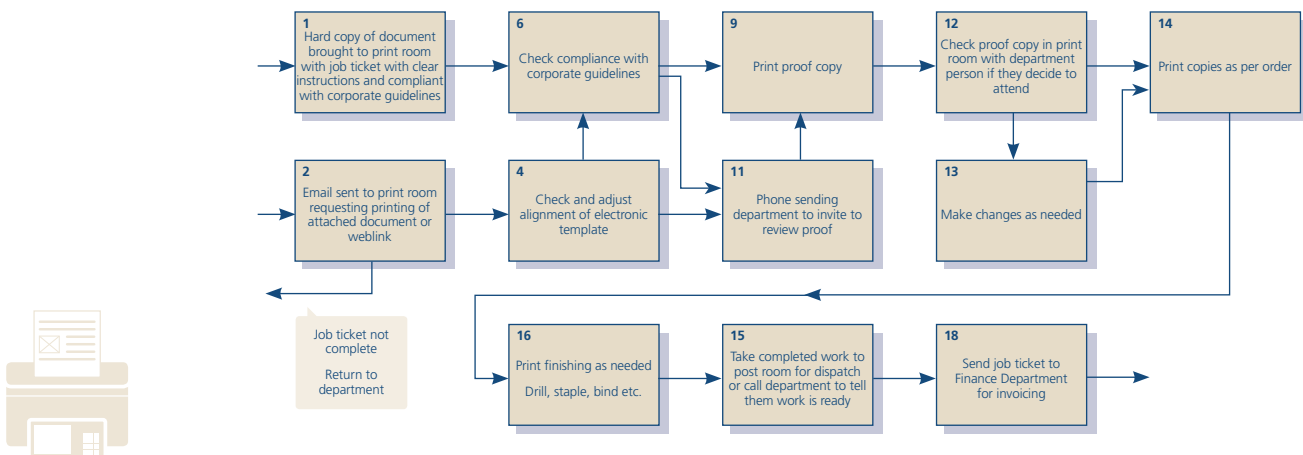
In the workshop the Print team and other council staff worked with our consultant to develop process maps for the core print room work. The illustration shows the current process for bulk photocopying, as an example.

During the course of the workshop we prepared process maps for each of the key processes, identified issues and problems linked to those processes. We then created an action plan to address the issues and to introduce improvements.

To Actuality...

Eliminating Unnecessary Process Steps

One of the key issues is the amount of time that was spent checking the exact requirements with departments and referring items back because they do not comply with corporate branding guidelines. The solution was to develop a clearer and more comprehensive printing order form so that departments that order printing work are clear that they must ensure compliance with branding guidelines before submitting work and give clear instructions about their requirements. Enabling departments to get it right first time will simplify the work of



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the printing service and reduce the time taken to complete each job.

The process map below shows the revised process for bulk photocopying:

Other improvements that were included in the action plan are:

- Design a clear set of instructions to be placed in a prominent position near to each departmental photocopier and ensure that someone in each department carries out routine daily checks and preventative maintenance.
- Move the automatic envelope stuffing machine that is currently in another department so that once laser serve documents are printed they can be immediately placed in envelopes ready to despatch rather than being transported back to departments for further checking and manual stuffing.

THE BENEFITS

Following our work the Council did not delay in starting to implement the Action Plan, within the first two weeks they had:

- Installed an easy to read set of instructions for daily maintenance of the first of the new printer/photocopiers that are to be installed in all departments;
- Started to log all call outs to attend to departmental photocopiers;
- Arranged a date for a presentation from the photocopier supplier to demonstrate paper control software to optimise the use of the different printing machines in the council;
- Installed a second telephone extension in the print room so that operators can take calls without having to stop the litho printer working;
- Set up initial meetings to take forward other key actions including revising the print order form, reviewing the system of charging for printing work and taking on printing work from other councils.

Reflecting on the experience of the Rapid Improvement Workshops officers of the Council felt empowered that following the workshops they had been able to move rapidly into action.

- Our work also identified areas where the Council will be able to reduce overall printing costs through:
- Using the available capacity to undertake more work 'in house' instead of using external suppliers
- Removing surplus capacity from the print room by rationalising the number of photocopiers
- Automating much of the envelope stuffing work that is currently returned to departments to be done manually

FURTHER INFORMATION

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