

# Introducing 5S within Nottinghamshire Probation



## From Possibility...

Nottinghamshire Probation Service is currently a high performing organisation. They have developed a relationship with Ad Esse over a period of many years through several improvement projects.

After carrying out a successful Lean diagnostic project and making the decision to go for a full Lean implementation, Nottinghamshire Probation wanted to carry out a small project using the 5S Lean tool. This small project would enable a new team to have some initial contact with Lean, giving them a headstart when the full project began. It was also important to the senior managers within the service that the Lean momentum gained through the diagnostic was not lost while the full piece of work was being procured.

The Offender Management team selected to take part in this project had already initiated their own morning meetings, another of the Lean tools. A key initial concern amongst the team, covering the busy city centre area, was that if they took time to implement 5S, they would not be able to meet the demands of their customers. 5S can be applied flexibly in a number of ways, therefore the project was carried out over 4 subsequent Tuesdays to try and minimise disruption to the service they offer.

### What is 5S?

5S is one of the foundation tools of Lean within the Visual Management area. It is used to create order and enable easy identification of any abnormalities within the working area. The tool is a series of actions all beginning with the letter 'S':

1. Sort - through items keeping only what is needed
2. Set – a place for everything and everything in its place
3. Shine – cleanliness
4. Standardise – develop standards, systems and procedures to maintain and monitor the first three S's
5. Sustain – develop audits to sustain the new level



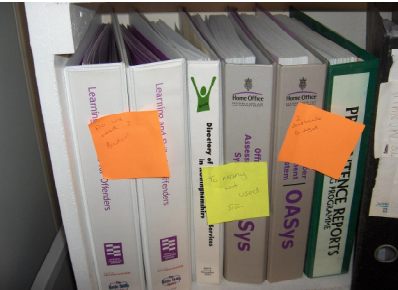
## OUR APPROACH

### Week 1

After introducing the team to 5S in a theoretical way, we quickly moved onto the practical Sort. The team focused on their 2 office areas, one open to a corridor and one closed, and the corridor linking them. Items in these areas were “tagged” for potential removal if they met any of a list of criteria:

Broken or damaged  
Not needed or used by the team  
Duplicated items  
Unidentified  
Out of date material.

The team then went through all of the tagged items and moved anything that they agreed was not needed into a quarantine area of the building. The team continued to sort any extra additional items over the next week and could re-claim quarantine items if they discovered they had been removed in haste and were needed after all.



Files tagged before removal from office

### Week 2

The team focussed on the Set and Shine phases of 5S – did they have everything they needed to be able to do their jobs and was it in a work-ready state?

One of the issues, raised by the team, was concerning how packs of paperwork were put together for different types of interviews. After a discussion it was identified that different team members were using different forms for three different types of interviews. It was also hard for the team to find the right form when they needed it and copies being readily available.

It was agreed that many of the differences were due to personal preference in the team and it was important that they provided a consistent service to offenders. Consistency would make it easier to transfer cases within the team in the case of holidays or sickness as each would know what to expect and the cases would not have to be re-read and reviewed.

The team generated ideas and came to a consensus as to what paperwork should be included in each type of interview. One suggestion was to place a set of filing drawers outside the interview rooms for quick access to less commonly used paperwork which would stop Offender Managers from having to run up and down to the office to collect these items if they were suddenly required.

### Week 3

The Set phase was continued in week 3 as new concerns had been raised by the team regarding the open plan section of the office. This office opened out onto a busy corridor with through-traffic and was situated next to 2 photocopying machines, which were regarded as distracting for the team. The suggestions were:

- Move office desks within the area so it was more conducive to working
- Move the photocopy machines.

After much debate it was agreed that the office layout would not be changed currently but they would organise with building maintenance to move the photocopier when a new electric outlet was placed in the suitable place identified.

The team then moved onto the Standardise phase. They discussed the issues around varying desk standards and what was needed on a desk for everyone to be able to do their job. The focus was not around de-personalising spaces but enabling everyone to have clarity over what work was or wasn't done which would benefit the team as a whole when staff were absent. One specific issue was the risk of confidential files being left on desks if they were buried under other documents or work files.

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## Introducing visual management

At this stage it was suggested that better visual management of the team's work and performance achievement could enable them to stay on track with targets instead of finding out 2 months later that they had failed something specific. Regular tracking of measures important to the team would give them advance warning of any potential failure so they would have the chance to put a preventative measure in place.

An Information Centre was suggested as a way of tracking these measures and the team identified what would need to be tracked based upon past successes and failures.

### Week 4

Focus was placed on the Sustainability of the changes already made by the team. An audit was introduced to the team so that they had a tool to check the standards they had put in place were being maintained and an action plan could be drawn up for any issues to be dealt with. The first audit was carried out by the team and it was identified that the initial Set had not fully addressed all of the teams issues with the office environment. Although this had been discussed in previous weeks the team decided at this stage they wanted to make changes to the layout of the open office which would resolve some of the issues.

## *To Actuality...*

After just week 1 a staggering number of items were removed including large items of unused furniture that not only freed up space within the office but some of which was utilised in other areas of the building that required additional furniture. Very few of the items had to be recovered in subsequent weeks which validated the decisions the team made about getting rid of them.



The quarantine area showing items removed as part of the Sort

In addition, the changes to the overall look and feel to the office environment were considerable.



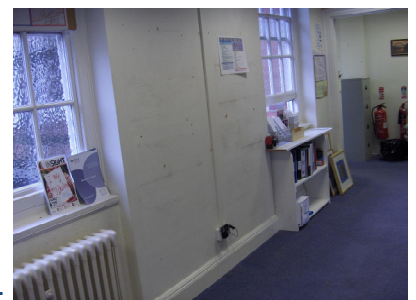
From this...



To This...



From this...



To This...

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## THE BENEFITS

The generic benefits of systematically applying 5S are:

- Waste is easily identified for elimination
- There is an easy way of achieving major change in an office environment
- You have a structure for establishing an orderly, clean and organised working environment
- It generates pride and ownership in the workplace creating a greater sense of team and individual accountability
- Creates more pleasant working environment and gives good impression to suppliers / customers that things are in control.

The specific benefits to the team were...

- A more ordered office environment
- Staff happier with work areas
- Easier to find required items and paperwork when they needed them
- Fewer distractions in workplace
- Team able to move towards providing a more consistent service for offenders
- Easier to spot problems before they become issues confidentiality etc
- Time saved in tracking down paperwork required to be able to do their job

The full introduction of the Information Centre will give the team the following:

- A tool to solve problems identified by the team and escalate to managers
- A way of tracking the performance measures important to them
- A way of anticipating and stopping failures before they happen

5S is a relatively simple set of principles to grasp but does need expert guidance the first time around. It isn't just tidying up it's about creating a functional environment by consensus.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

To receive regular case studies and articles like this one, you can subscribe to our newsletter 'Actualty'. Contact us at Ad Esse Consulting Ltd.

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