

The Challenge

As part of a wider process of commercialisation, this city council was looking to transform its repair and maintenance service (R&M) into a streamlined, efficient resource which could then be used to generate income from external sources, such as care homes and private schools.

Ameo was engaged to review the current state of the service and to suggest changes which would improve its operation. In particular, the Council wished to see improvement around financial reporting, communication with customers and compliance with national standards.

The Outcome

Our findings showed that substantial investment would be needed if the team were to be transformed into the marketable resource the Council was seeking. However, we also identified a number of high-impact quick wins.

- To streamline the service, we proposed a single IT system to replace the five systems currently in use
- To track the progress of jobs, and to provide an audit trail, we proposed tighter financial controls.
- To improve understanding of workload / income, we introduced a performance dashboard.
- To ensure the correct information was captured at the outset, we recommended replacing the email reporting system with a web-based form.

The Engagement

Our review focused very much on the functionality of the service for end users. We deployed subject matter experts to quantify IT and finance needs, and we worked closely with R&M staff both in the office and in the field to understand how work actually flowed around the business. We produced a process map, then trained team members to update it by workshadowing colleagues.

To understand where inefficiencies existed, we undertook a value-streaming exercise. We examined each step in the workflow and identified four key values: reporting, diagnosis, mobilisation and completion. Activities not contributing to one of these were identified as waste. We backed this up with demand sampling (customer calls) and data sampling (job sheets). This revealed that closure of jobs was a particular problem, and that around 30% of customer calls were chasing unfinished work.

We noticed an unusually high number of emergency call outs, which was leading to many non-emergency jobs being put on hold. It turned out R&M had only two response options: *emergency* (within one day) and *other* (up to three weeks). We recommended a third, one-week option, with stricter rules around what could be deemed an emergency. This would allow the team both to complete more jobs and to better manage expectations.