

SCCRC demonstrates its effective and efficient use of public funds with SolCase

The Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission (SCCRC) was established as an independent public body in April 1999 to review possible miscarriages of justice. Those convicted of a criminal offence in Scotland can apply to the Commission, normally after they have unsuccessfully appealed, to have their convictions or sentences reviewed.

As at 31 March 2006, the Commission was staffed by a Chief Executive, Director of Administration, 2 Senior Legal Officers, 8 Legal Officers and 3 Administration Staff.

Case review procedure

The Commission's Legal Officers investigate cases under the strategic direction of the Chief Executive and Board Members. The Board of the Commission is responsible for deciding whether or not cases should be referred to the High Court.

All applications received by the Commission are initially considered by the Chief Executive before a recommendation is made to the Board on whether or not to accept, reject or continue the case for further information.

If accepted for full review, the case is allocated to a Legal Officer and the investigation process commences in accordance with the Commission's documented case handling procedures.

The need for change

In 2004, the Commission's newly appointed Chief Executive initiated a review of the Commission's case handling procedures in recognition that the current system, a combination of manual records and excel spreadsheet records, could be dramatically improved in order to enhance performance and efficiency, value for money, consistency and service delivery, all of which fell within the remit of the Scottish Executive's Best Value ethos. A significant part of this review was to investigate and implement an electronic case management system. After a full tender and evaluation exercise, SolCase from LexisNexis Visualfiles was selected by the Commission.

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SolCase use at the Commission

Since its development and installation at the Commission in 2004, the use of SolCase has continued to evolve to ensure that its benefits are maximised. SolCase is currently used for the following:

- All applications received by the Commission are recorded in detail on SolCase so that a full chronological record of events can be maintained and automated case review procedures followed by all staff
- A full set of report scripts have been developed in order to facilitate effective management review and produce case statistics for statutory reporting
- A separate Freedom of Information system has been developed in order to record, process and monitor all requests received by the Commission

Measurable benefits

In summary, the following benefits have been realised at the Commission as a result of the development and installation of SolCase:

- Case handling procedures have been fully reviewed and automated within the case management system
- Standard documents have been established at all key stages in the case review process within the system which results in instantaneous production and guaranteed consistency by users and case review staff
- A complete and accurate case history is now maintained in a standard format which is accessible and clearly auditable
- Key data and statistics to facilitate management review and reporting are produced instantaneously on demand

To demonstrate the impact of these benefits on the Commission's overall performance, the impact on key performance indicators is as follows:

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Highest level of applications and conclusions: Since the installation of SolCase, the Commission has received its highest level of applications, yet as a result of efficiencies in the case review process has managed to conclude more cases than ever and has eradicated its backlog of cases awaiting review during 2005-06.

	2004-05	2005-06
Cases Received	118	165
Cases Concluded	130	146

Significant reductions in average case review time: The average time taken to review a case has also dramatically reduced to 11 months in 2004-05 and 7 months in 2005-06, compared to a peak of 21.4 months in 2002-03. Again, these improvements in performance are in large due to efficiencies and automation in the case review process as a result of SolCase.

Lowest ever unit cost: The financial impact of increased efficiencies is also measured by the Commission, and in 2005-06 the lowest ever unit cost per concluded case was recorded at £5,649. The unit cost has reduced each year since the Commission was established with only one very small increase recorded in 2004-05 as a result of the initial outlay on the SolCase system.

Increased stakeholder awareness and satisfaction: The Commission monitors user satisfaction on an ongoing basis, and this has been enhanced as a result of more regular case updates and consistency in approach. In 2004-05 the Commission was awarded the Chartermark accreditation, which was subsequently reassessed and awarded in April 2006, recognising the Commission's commitment to stakeholders needs and standards of service.



Chris Reddick (Director of Administration at SCCRC) comments “Overall, the Commission has managed to demonstrate its effective and efficient use of public funds to deliver its core aims and objectives. The development, installation and utilisation of SolCase within the Commission has contributed significantly to this success.

In a bid to continuously evolve, our future plans include protecting and enhancing system investment, integrating with corporate systems, investigating electronic communication and identifying and assessing upgrade opportunities.”

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