

Suffolk County Council Case Study

Suffolk County Council (CC) is the administrative local authority for the county of Suffolk in East Anglia. Suffolk CC is responsible for a population of 760,000 people, including Adult & Community Services; Health, Wellbeing & Children's services, Growth, Highways & Infrastructure and Fire & Public Safety. It employs approximately 6,000 people across the region.

Three years ago, Suffolk CC selected Microsoft O365 Cloud services for its capability to support secure access, from anywhere, to data and a wide range of integrated applications. To support the rollout, the Council launched a program called 'FreeMe' to drive change in ways of working with the new technology.

The 'FreeMe' program was predominantly used to drive the change to use Skype for Business across the council for all telephony, to ensure they could maximise time with customers while putting service needs first. With Skype for Business being decommissioned in November 2020, the Council knew it needed help to implement Microsoft 365, including Teams, throughout its 6,000 people strong workforce.

To ensure all staff were moved across by the November 2020 deadline, the Council asked Changing Social for a change strategy & plan, to implement a user centred approach, with several core priorities identified:

- All users moved to Microsoft Teams for chat & telephony by November 2020
- Improve meeting administration and management of actions
- Keep remote workers connected to key information
- Save time on administrative type activities to increase time spent working with customers

"We chose Changing Social because of how focused they are on securing people adopting technology within the longer term, bringing people on the journey and changing mindsets"
– Simon Mason, Head of Design and Platforms, Suffolk CC

With significant resistance to change after the recent rollout of Skype for Business, Changing Social had to persuade stakeholders and staff that Microsoft Teams was both better and easier to use. Using an initial workshop to understand their issues and current state, as well as their vision & where they wanted to go, Changing Social developed a strategy & detailed plan to support their vision using our knowledge of adoption of Teams and working out specific issues for Suffolk, such as ways in which they could re-ignite their Digital Stars programme to become Digital Champions for Teams. Part of the plan included upskilling users on Live Events, by running a large webinar to help people run their own Live Events.

Suffolk CC has had a long and successful history of remote working and enabling flexible working so were keen to take this further with Teams. Their usage of Teams increased by 1,000% overnight due to Covid-19 with their remote workers went from 800 to 5,000 and they now have on average 1,700 meetings taking place every day. Simon said, "People were having to adapt to a new way of working, but by using CS' expertise as a sounding board, they have embraced the changes very quickly. With the new delivery of Teams, we were able to stream the first County Councils meeting to the local citizens."

Collaborating with key community partners outside of the Council is something they required, due to Covid-19 and the lockdown, and they loved this ability using Teams. Simon made it clear Teams was able to do that "we had 50/60 local MPs in a single Teams meeting at once, all communicating online at once."

Looking forward to the future, Simon thinks Suffolk CC employees are "becoming more confident in trying new technology, they're less worried about failing and they have more confidence within themselves. We think people will take to the move from Skype for Business to Teams for telephony very quickly, and easily because of the role Changing Social has had in our Teams implementation"