



Tower Hamlets Council Reduce the Paper Trail with NGA ResourceLink



Covering both the HR and payroll requirements for the Council, NGA ResourceLink is especially valued at Tower Hamlets for its performance in data management and self-service.

Responding to the need for efficiency in HR and payroll

The dynamics of HR are changing, partly driven by the need to run leaner HR and payroll functions. Self-service functionality is therefore vital as it lets managers and staff manage as many HR and payroll tasks themselves as possible.

Nick Harvey, HR Business Information Manager at Tower Hamlets, says: "Self-service functionality alleviates pressure on our HR and payroll functions. Lots of tasks used to be manual and paper-heavy, but now they are online and things are being done in a much more efficient way. Having people input their own data also reduces the chance of errors.

"With 140 Council sites across the borough and staff increasingly working from home, we want to remove a lot of the physical transfer of forms and other pieces of paper. As much as anything, it's a security issue and we prefer personal information to be dealt with through secure electronic systems rather than through paper moving around.

About Tower Hamlets Council

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets in East London covers a diverse area, from dense residential streets to the commercial developments of Canary Wharf. The Council provides more than 200 services to approximately 270,000 residents.

"A good example is self-service for annual leave requests and approval. As well as the main request and approval functions, the system also gives managers access to a calendar where they can see all of the information they need. It is replacing individual department spreadsheet-based systems."

Nick does however recognise that an entirely system-based format isn't appropriate as many staff work in the field and have no access to the Council's systems. This is why paper forms are still an option for many processes. An alternative is that line managers are able to carry out some functions on employees' behalf where appropriate.

Maintaining an audit trail

Another benefit of the self-service approach is that it automatically creates an easily accessible audit trail. Tower Hamlets staff no longer need to wade through reams of paper to carry out audits of HR and payroll functions or processes. This is essential in a local authority, where internal and external audits are common.

Nick says: "We have recently been told by external auditors that they were pleased with the systems we have in place, with NGA ResourceLink being one of them."

“Agency workers are managed in a separate system and here too Tower Hamlets have achieved integration through an interface with NGA ResourceLink. This provides HR and management with more accurate establishment lists. ”

Nick Harvey
HR Business Information Manager, Tower Hamlets

Managing change

When each task was moved to self-service it was important that managers and staff were seen as stakeholders in order to achieve buy-in. NGA worked with Tower Hamlets on comprehensive communications plans including system demonstrations, line managers' workshops, user forums and user guides.

There was some initial concern about what self-service would mean to people. This is why time was taken to provide reassurance about the benefits that would be enjoyed.

Information at line managers' fingertips

NGA ResourceLink has also brought improvements in the way that sickness is recorded. Managers now have access to real time data on sickness, whereas previously data was submitted and processed before managers could see up-to-date information. Managers can access the data and are better able to generate accurate reports to monitor and analyse trends.

This data management capacity is good for the HR department too, as Nick Harvey explains: “I like the fact that we have one place where all of the data is stored. It gives us a ‘one version of the truth’ database that we felt was essential for efficiency and data integrity.

“An example of why this matters is expenses, where we need to keep full records of claims submitted and approved or rejected. Having all of this data in one place means it's there to be examined when necessary and it makes it easier to run reports.”

Reducing the number of separate systems

As with any large organisation, Tower Hamlets is always keen to improve efficiency through systems integration where possible. One way that this is happening is the expanding use of the NGA ResourceLink e-forms function. For example, the declaration of interest form can be completed on this system, rather than requiring completion on the separate system that was previously used.

Another feature to improve efficiency has been the development of the solution's workflow tool, which sits alongside the e-forms functionality. It means that the system is updated automatically when the appropriate steps in e-form completion and submission have been made, reducing HR intervention as a result.

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Tower Hamlets are looking to do further integration, such as replacing the separate third party recruitment system with the NGA ResourceLink recruitment module. Nick Harvey concludes: “This development, alongside the interface with the agency workers system, will be another example of how NGA ResourceLink is enabling us to put the crucial ‘one version of the truth’ concept in to action at Tower Hamlets.”

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