

Realising Real Benefits from Best Value Reviews



Derbyshire Constabulary

The term Best Value needs no introduction in the public sector. In the police service, all core services must be reviewed over a rolling 5 year programme. The goal is to improve both the cost and quality of services.

The success of the review process is dependent on the recommendations from the review being implemented. This requires the buy in of all stakeholders to proposed change, including those delivering the service and senior officers. Buy in from the latter is especially true when investment is required to realise efficiency savings.



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Derbyshire Constabulary combine a structured approach to their projects with the use of predictive technology to help ensure that the benefits are realised. A project manager is appointed from the Best Value Department and a rigorous review methodology is used. A second key member of the project team is a plan manager who is usually a senior member of staff from the service being reviewed. They are responsible both for gathering the evidence to support recommendations for change and for implementation, thus ensuring ownership within the service delivery area.

The Best Value Department has recently acquired Lanner Group's WITNESS simulation software. With WITNESS, a simulation model of the process under review is constructed that behaves in the same way as the real process. Options for change can then be investigated prior to implementation.



The role of WITNESS in ensuring the successful implementation of Best Value recommendations is highlighted in two recent projects below.

Ensuring Successful Implementation of a Crime Reporting Unit.

Derbyshire's first experience of using WITNESS was in their Best Value review of crime reporting. Traditionally, officers at the scene of a crime would take notes that would then be input back at the station. This typically occurs at the end of a shift or even the following day. This process can compromise the quality of intelligence gathering, through both the delay in publishing the information and the potential for reduced accuracy and completeness. Further, the time to input data on a computer to produce a report occupies valuable police time.

To enhance the quality of crime reporting, the best value team proposed a dedicated call taking facility to enable officers to report crime via an 0800 free-phone number. This would both reduce the time spent by officers recording the crime, and ensure consistent high quality capturing of the information. To test the feasibility of this approach, a pilot was planned in one of the divisions.

"Ensuring that we had the capacity to deal with the phone calls from day one was critical to the success of this pilot," said Best Value officer Paul Bates, "otherwise officers would not use the service."

One year's crimes were analysed from the division selected for the pilot to determine the volume profile by time of day. This information was fed into a WITNESS model together with anticipated call durations for the different types of crime. WITNESS Optimiser was then used to match the number of call takers on each shift with the peaks and troughs in volumes at different times of the day and week.

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Derbyshire are planning to extend the study to look at the effect of alternative communications methods would have on crime reporting. A wider study looking at how call taking teams are structured and their roles is also on the agenda.

Challenging Vehicle Maintenance Practice.

Derbyshire's second project was carried out as part of a review of Administration and Finance. Currently, vehicle maintenance is carried out at 8 satellite workshops spread across Derbyshire. The workshops deal with c5400 vehicles p.a., carrying out routine servicing and dealing with ad hoc faults or damage.

As part of challenging current practice, it was decided by the project team to assess the potential gains that might accrue from a centralised facility. In addition to economies of scale that might be accrued from such a move, the team also investigated the savings in officer time that could accrue by using support staff to drop off and pick up vehicles.

A simulation model was constructed to replicate the current process. Historical vehicle maintenance incident data is down loaded into the model. This includes the date of the incident and its nature, i.e. whether the officer would need to wait whilst the repair is carried out or return to duty in another vehicle. The model records the total travel time incurred. Experiments can then be carried out measure the effect of creating a single workshop at any desired location.

The model has shown potential for saving over £100K p.a. of police officer time whilst reducing the number of vehicles off the road at any time. The findings from the study have been submitted to the board with a recommendation to take the project forward. It is likely that there will be a further role for simulation in sizing any new facility.

"WITNESS allows us to be creative in our best value reviews" said Superintendent Debbie Kelly, Head of Corporate Development. "Manual methods of investigating options for change are laborious; with WITNESS many options can be evaluated and greater improvements can be made. The chosen solution can then be practised prior to implementation, providing a valuable safety net".

