

Essex Shared Services Agency



Essex Shared Services Agency (ESSA) is one of the leading Shared Services Centres in the country. It employs 70 people and provides specialist financial and accounting support, transaction processing and help desk facilities for health sector organisations in Essex.

Customer Essex Shared Services Agency	Solutions Attachment Manager Cash Management eSeries Fixed Assets Fleet Management	General Ledger ICE Invoice Approval Purchase Ledger Purchase Ordering Purchase-to-Pay	Sales Ledger Stock Management Workflow
Market Sector Health Sector			
Country United Kingdom			

Introduction

Essex Shared Services Agency's (ESSA) customer base is made up of 12 organisations including Acute Trusts, Strategic Health Authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Community Trusts and other Specialist Trusts such as the Essex Ambulance Service.

ESSA enables its customers to focus on their core business of providing patient care through the provision of outsourced finance and accounting management by its dedicated team of experts.

It adds value by giving customers access to a range of specialist financial skills and advanced technology that wouldn't otherwise be accessible.

The Requirement

When Essex Shared Services Agency was launched, it needed to deploy an enterprise-wide financials solution that would help it to streamline the way in which its services were delivered.

These needed to maximise reporting capabilities and information dissemination, meet e-government objectives, set standards for customer service and ensure processes were as efficient as possible.

A high-functionality, low-maintenance system was required in order to meet these needs and comply with demanding Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with its customers.

The Solution

ESSA chose Capita IB Solutions, the provider of software and services to the health and public sectors, to provide its financial solution, Integra, based on several key criteria. Firstly, Capita IB Solutions was able to demonstrate an understanding of the demands of the health sector, including compliance with e-government objectives; secondly, the functionality and high integration capabilities of Integra were the best on the market; and thirdly, it was a proven, cost-effective solution.

For the initial launch, Capita IB Solutions provided a financial solution comprising the following Integra modules: purchase ledger, sales ledger, general ledger, purchase ordering, cash management and fixed assets. The solution was underpinned with an Oracle Database, and the hardware was provided in conjunction with Capita IB Solutions.

The hardware platform has been expanded and upgraded since the initial implementation, in line with the expansion of service provision by Essex Shared Services Agency. Capita IB Solutions has continued to play a significant role in assisting the Agency with the technical infrastructure through provision of a Managed Service.

Through this service, Capita IB Solutions has assisted with the management of the database environment, the operating system, the Citrix environment and elements of the application software as defined within a Service Operating Schedule and Service Level Agreement agreed with the Agency each year. There are currently approximately 450 users of the system across Essex.

The Benefits

The Capita IB Solutions' financial solution means that ESSA now has one integrated system rather than a plethora of silo systems. Tasks and reports on the status of finances and accounting can be completed in minutes.

Sally Thornton, Director of Finance at Essex Shared Services Agency, comments: "Adopting standardised processes and a single system means that we can easily access most documentation. We can provide our customers with real-time information and status reports on any aspect of their enterprise at any time - in a matter of seconds.

"We've now converted all of our users to the system and have moved into what we term a development phase, in order to draw out more functionality. We are now gradually utilising more and more of the system's capabilities, and in the next 12 months we're hoping to deploy extra modules such as stock management. The ultimate goal is to create an almost paperless environment.

"During the past twelve months, as initiation of the development phase, the Agency has introduced the Integra Fleet Management Module to monitor usage of the ambulance fleet, a Catalogue Management Application to streamline the purchase-to-pay cycle, and a document imaging solution provided by Capita IB Solutions in partnership with SoftCo."

Ongoing activity will see the introduction of web based requisitioning for end users of the application, the introduction of Integra workflow and the provision of access to a range of detailed budgetary control reports to relevant managers. Essex Shared Services Agency is now starting to see dramatic increases in productivity; for example, functions such as monthly reports that would otherwise take several days, now take a matter of minutes.

The team now has more time to focus on servicing its customers better, implementing new ideas and keeping pace with the e-government agenda. The number of on-line users of the financial system has more than doubled in two years.

Sally comments: "Since we made the decision to use Capita IB Solutions financial and procurement system, Integra, the team at Capita IB Solutions has proved invaluable. From day one their consultants have been excellent and they've always offered high levels of support. They are very responsive, and this has meant that we've derived maximum value from the system."

According to its auditors, part of the reason that Essex Shared Services Agency has become one of the country's leading Shared Services Agencies is through its adoption of such a sophisticated financials solution, backed by standardised financial procedures and structures.

Sally concludes: "There is so much flux in the health sector at the moment, and organisations cannot afford to take their eye off the ball and spend large quantities of time on administrative functions such as accounting. With the help of Capita IB Solutions, we are helping the NHS to streamline processes, meet e-government objectives and ultimately improve the delivery of patient care."

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