

# Northern Ireland Civil Service

## Northern Ireland Civil Service transforms HR services for 28,000 employees with Fujitsu

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Derek Baker, Director of Corporate HR, Northern Ireland Civil Service



### The customer

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is the permanent bureaucracy of Crown employees that supports the Northern Ireland Executive, the devolved government of Northern Ireland. It supports the Assembly, the Executive and the institutions of government. With 28,000 employees, it serves local ministers and carries out the administrative work of government. As with all public sector bodies, there is a continual need to manage costs while providing the best possible service to the tax payer.

### The challenge

NICS consists of twelve separate departments, each of which had its own disparate HR function with associated applications and databases. With certain critical systems reaching end of life, the organisation needed to find suitable replacements. During this process, NICS began to think more radically about restructuring the entire HR ecosystem. Under pressure to reduce costs while improving efficiency and enabling better reporting, the organisation realised that implementing a shared service approach across all departments would be an ideal solution.

*“Our payroll applications and certain databases were facing obsolescence so we knew we had to replace them. As part of that process, we realised we could look at a more significant shift in how we deliver HR services across the organisation,”* explains Derek Baker, Director of Corporate HR, NICS. *“With twelve departments each running their own HR function, there was a huge amount of duplication but also a lack of consistency in how policy was interpreted. A centralised shared service provided a new vision for how we could handle HR.”*

In 2006, NICS engaged Fujitsu to develop a new outsourced HR model – the HR Connect project – that would encompass delivery of applications as well as shared services such as transactional processing, query resolution and case work. This was the first such project of its kind in UK government.

### THE CUSTOMER

Country: United Kingdom  
 Founded: 1921  
 Industry: Public Sector  
 Employees: 28,000  
 Website: [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)



### THE CHALLENGE

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) wanted to implement a shared service approach to HR across its twelve departments in order to manage costs more effectively and deliver a more responsive service. It also wanted to replace or upgrade a number of outdated legacy applications.

### THE SOLUTION

NICS worked with Fujitsu to deploy a lasting service structure that lends itself to the effective management of multiple service delivery groups, including payroll and recruitment. The combination of a shared service approach and outsourcing makes it a ground-breaking project for the UK public sector and has gained it Pathfinder status from the UK government.

### THE BENEFIT

- Separating the provision of transactional activities allows HR professionals to concentrate on the strategic agenda and address departmental HR issues.
- It has released 400 HR staff for redeployment to other activities in the Northern Ireland departments.
- Line managers and employees have been empowered to fulfil their roles more effectively through the provision of HR self-service facilities.
- The centralised shared service centre provides standardised, simplified and consistent administration, advice and information support across all departments.

## The solution

Fujitsu worked closely with NICS to develop a new shared service model. Following some early teething problems, both teams knuckled down to deliver the new HR solution.

*"In a sense we had bitten off more than we could chew. There was a lot of internal resistance and union objections. This was heightened when it was realised that the original deployment plan – to roll it out by department – wouldn't work,"* adds Paul Wickens, Chief Executive of Enterprise Shared Services. *"However, we had an open and honest relationship with Fujitsu and together we persevered to get the project back on track. This resulted in its eventual successful implementation."*

Under the HR Connect project, personnel administration, including HR administration, Payroll, Learning and Development, Recruitment and Absence Management is being delivered from a shared service centre staffed by an outsourced team of 200 staff. The goal of the project is to manage HR administration services and create a streamlined, effective HR structure that lends itself to the effective management of the service delivery groups and encourages the continuous enhancement of the service. Across all twelve departments there now exists a common, consistent approach to HR services and applications which is freeing up HR to focus on more strategic organisational objectives.

*"Our employees have now fully engaged with the new service despite their earlier scepticism. This is because, now that it is up and running, they can see that it is delivering a simpler, more effective HR function,"* comments Wickens. *"It is easy for them to access a variety of online tools to manage their careers. It is also consistent across all departments which reduces confusion and duplication."*

## The benefit

The new service has resulted in a more efficient and effective delivery of HR services as well as enabling civil servants to refocus efforts on frontline services. As a result, over 400 HR staff have been redeployed within the organisation. By separating the provision of transactional activities, the service also allows HR staff to concentrate on the strategic agenda and address departmental HR issues. The introduction of online self-service facilities is empowering line managers – and employees – to fulfil their roles more effectively.

*"By working with the private sector, we have brought much more rigour to the HR business in terms of metrics and service levels. Previously, we had little idea or concern about how much the HR function cost, what it specifically provided and who was responsible,"* continues Baker. *"Now we have a much more transparent system with clear costs and contracted levels of service. Most tasks, whether it is handling a grievance, recruiting new staff or booking time off, are now handled much more consistently and many routine operations are executed very simply via the online portal."*

*"We now have much better quality information on absences, performance management and workforce issues,"* agrees Wickens. *"This then feeds into our longer term strategic planning for optimal effectiveness and accuracy."*

The centralised shared service centre provides standardised, simplified and consistent administration, advice and information support across all departments. This means more clarity of focus and responsibility. Payroll is delivered with 99.9 per cent reliability and managers have total visibility of processes and requests. Pay awards can be introduced in a matter of weeks rather than the three to six months it would previously have taken.

With the new service fully live, Fujitsu remains engaged in delivering additional value to NICS from both a strategic and operational delivery perspective. The annual HR business plan, for example, generates new initiatives across the business, each of which is supported in some capacity by Fujitsu. It also holds an annual innovation event to encourage further exploration of organisational development. HR Connect has also attracted interest from other public sector bodies in the UK, Ireland and further afield who have sent delegations to explore this new paradigm of service delivery.

*"People come to see what we have done and they are amazed at what we have achieved. This project has only brought us to the starting grid in providing a platform on which we can build and innovate,"* concludes Baker. *"We mustn't rest on our laurels. Together with Fujitsu, we must continue to refine, enhance and improve the HR service. This is a long term project that will deliver more value as it evolves."*

## About Fujitsu

Fujitsu is the leading Japanese information and communication technology (ICT) company offering a full range of technology products, solutions and services. Over 170,000 Fujitsu people support customers in more than 100 countries. We use our experience and the power of ICT to shape the future of society with our customers. Fujitsu Limited (TSE:6702) reported consolidated revenues of 4.5 trillion yen (US\$55 billion) for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2011. For more information, please see [www.fujitsu.com](http://www.fujitsu.com)

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2012-08-30

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