

CROWN OFFICE AND PROCURATOR FISCAL SERVICE (COPFS)

Work the ecosystem

COPFS is responsible for the prosecution of crime in Scotland, the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths, and the investigation of complaints against the police.

COPFS works closely with criminal justice partners to help make Scotland a safer place. Disclosure is an absolutely crucial part of the criminal justice system in Scotland. Disclosure must be timely and effective to ensure justice, and to prevent unnecessary trials and delays. The Crown is obliged to disclose all material information for or against the accused (subject to any public interest considerations).

Their disclosure responsibilities must be considered at all stages of a case - from the point at which the case may proceed to trial, right through to the conclusion of any trial. These responsibilities continue through any subsequent appeal proceedings, and even after the final disposal of a case. There could be a serious breach of rights if the Crown did not fulfill their disclosure obligations to the defense.

WHAT COPFS NEEDED

350,000: that is the approximate number of cases that COPFS processes every year. As a result, they generate significant quantities of evidential material in discharging their duty of disclosure to multiple defence agents. Information is normally provided in hard copy and couriered to the agents. There are inherent loopholes – uncertain delivery, maintaining records of information coming in at high volumes. In addition these paper-based processes were inefficient and time consuming for defence agents and Crown Office staff.

THE CHALLENGE

COPFS wanted their disclosure practice to evolve in a way that would address the Government's ICT agenda of Digital Inclusion. In 2007, they reached a definite mandate to improve the disclosure practice for electronic evidence. They wanted to establish a simple, secure, efficient, flexible and more direct disclosure path for electronic evidence that was supported by a robust audit trail.

OUR ANSWER

In 2008, we began working with COPFS on the Secure Disclosure of evidence System (SDS). We consulted with a variety of COPFS people (including senior management, area fiscal office representatives, IT operations, and policy and legal experts.) They helped specify, design, implement and fine-tune a workable solution that would support secure electronic disclosure.

CASE STUDY

JUSTICE

“From the inception of the project, CGI has provided appropriate and expert support. The CGI staff who have worked on the Secure Disclosure system are knowledgeable, helpful and have a wealth of experience on which they can draw. Those staff, very obviously, have also the support and back up from colleagues that only a ‘Tier 1’ company can provide.”

Bill Reid, Manager,
COPFS IT Operations

We also worked closely with the resident systems integrator to develop interfaces to line-of-business systems in a way that would ensure system interoperability in the long term.

In the pilot phase, access was granted to 35 agents within three solicitor firms to download evidence material via SDS. With very few negative issues reported, COPFS was encouraged to use the overwhelmingly positive feedback gathered to refine the system to suit their reporting needs and agent operating practices for managing disclosure material.

A SUCCESS STORY

The benefits were immediate. There was faster access to disclosure material and reduced costs of paper-handling. This reassured COPFS who agreed on a full rollout of the system from December 2010 at a rate of 30 agents per month. The system has now been rolled out to almost all of the qualifying solicitors in Scotland; there are currently 850 registered users.

Take Lisa and Gillian for example. Both are expert disclosure operatives who can now 'print' a binder of evidence material from their line-of-business system. Within minutes of this operation, the information is securely packaged, compressed, uploaded and made available for download by all defense agents who are entitled to access the information.

Standard COPFS letters and schedules are automatically included within the binder; Lisa and Gillian no longer need to perform this previously manual task. They can also run a case summary report to determine the download and status history of all binders that relate to a particular Case. The same report is designed for use by the Procurators Fiscal to present in court as evidence of disclosure to defense agents.

The partnership has been a great success. There's a feeling of openness, easy access to experts from both parties and a willingness to share. That's made the experience of working together enjoyable, as well as successful, for both COPFS and us. We worked brilliantly together.

WHY WORK WITH US?

We've worked successfully with organisations such as yours in the criminal justice sector. We make sure we listen so we can understand not just your business needs but also your people, policy and operations. You can trust us to produce and implement clear, flexible and forward-thinking strategies that support your business needs as they evolve.

"The project referenced in this case study was delivered by Logica, which CGI acquired in August 2012"

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About CGI

With over 68,000 professionals in 40 countries, CGI fosters local accountability for client success while bringing global delivery capabilities to clients' front doors. Founded in 1976, CGI applies a disciplined delivery approach that has achieved an industry-leading track record of on-time, on-budget projects. Our high-quality business consulting, systems integration and outsourcing services help clients leverage current investments while adopting new technology and business strategies that achieve top and bottom line results. As a demonstration of our commitment, our average client satisfaction score for the past 10 years has measured consistently higher than 9 out of 10.

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KEY BENEFITS

- Automated preparation and collation of disclosure so there's less room for error
- Avoided the need for defense agents to repeatedly visit COPFS offices to uplift disclosure ensured disclosure can be prepared in any office for any case and published to the website
- Supported 'Green' agenda: reduced use of paper for disclosure of documentary productions and generation of receipts
- Enabled audit reporting to confirm that COPFS disclosure obligations have been met.