

Case Study

ALS Effectiveness at East Norfolk Sixth Form College from Months to Minutes with SpirALS and TEAM



East Norfolk Sixth Form College is situated in the coastal town of Gorleston serving a large area including the Norfolk Broads. The College is a community of 1850 full time 16-19 year old students as well as adult provision. The College offers a broad based course provision including over 40 AS/A2 subjects, BTEC courses and a range of GCSE subjects.

Over the years the College has built a reputation for a friendly and caring community. In 2010 the College was in the top 20 of all colleges for the average UCAS points achieved per student for the 11th consecutive year in the annual Guardian survey.

By January 2010 East Norfolk College had reached the stage for an updated structure and delivery of its Additional Learning Support provision. The whole lifecycle required a comprehensive review; from the need to research and respond swiftly to students (with Special Education and Additional Needs) demographic trends, to formulate more accurate funding cases for students with complex needs and requirements to show the effectiveness of that funding at individual student levels after allocation.

The Challenge

The ALS department was reliant on a mix of locally-developed and 3rd party systems which were both time-consuming and cumbersome in use. As many as four in-house datasets needed to be queried just for information to be made available for key documents such as the college Quality Improvement Plan, Self-Assessment Review and for Ofsted Inspection purposes.

Another issue was the inability to respond in a timely manner to Senior Management Team requests for new analysis or funding needs reports. These had to be defined by the ALS department, and then modelled in a spread sheet for the Management Information team, who in turn used this to place on data Student Returns for the “then” Learning Skills Council and more lately the Young Person’s Learning Agency and Skills Funding Agency. The turn-round time for these reports was often measured in 1 – 2 months for deadlines at certain times of the year.



The Solution

Nicholas Morgan-Baker, incoming ALS Manager at East Norfolk College, approached other colleges and learned about the step-change improvements in ALS practice with Midas Systems. The college decided to implement the SpirALS module for central ALS management and administration, and the complementary TEAM module, specifically designed for use and input by support staff themselves.

Nicholas Morgan-Baker: *“From a strategic planning perspective, SpirALS has given us increased ability to highlight priorities, identify trends, and assemble timely cases for funding, e.g., recently we had to accommodate increased numbers of students with autistic spectrum & mental health issues. We did the analysis and preparation in literally half the time it would have taken us prior to having SpirALS. Processes are simplified, e.g., SpLD tracking and Exam Access Arrangements now use the same administrative processes”.*

A key difference between Midas-using colleges and those which have an in-house-developed system is that the ALS department owns and controls all of its data. This has dramatically improved the ability of the ALS manager to provide analysis at short notice: *“SpirALS has cut the time immensely around reporting. Recently, our administrator was able to get me a complicated report in just 30 minutes, with the help of Midas support! I was able to use it in a presentation that same day. I can also get detailed data to back up any need for extra support staff and to support budget forecasts, so necessary in a time of financial rigour”.*

Futures

A last word from Nicholas Morgan-Baker: *“Besides the improvements across the board in areas like funding compliance, cross-college documentation, clarification of cost data with TEAM, and curriculum tracking, we now have the ability to run a comparative study of the effectiveness of exam arrangements and the corresponding achievement and retention rates. We believe that this study could ultimately produce a research paper”.*

End of Case Study

