



## PUTTING CUSTOMERS AT THE CENTRE OF THEIR BUSINESS: SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

The DWP is working diligently to provide “The Case for Change” across all their services, particularly in preventing double-handling of cases and putting their customer at the centre of their business. South Ayrshire Council Benefit Services have also been working toward this transformational government initiative to improve services to their community.

They recently requested SunGard Public Sector to conduct a SPRINT Workshop to demonstrate how to rapidly transform their business practices and provide more efficient services to their customers. Mari Alexander, Benefits Supervisor and Irene McMillan, Assistant Benefits Officer, organised and attended a SPRINT Workshop delivered by SunGard Public Sector. Irene said, “Prior to taking the SPRINT Workshop, we were taking an average of 21 days to process changes of circumstance. Now after SPRINT, it now takes an average of 15 days to process. We’re aiming for 14 days and plan to reach this goal by the end of the year.”



## SPRINT: A CASE FOR CHANGE

The SPRINT Workshop (Sustainable Performance Results in No Time) demonstrates how you can rapidly transform the business practices within your organisation to reap instant benefits. “We were looking forward to taking the SPRINT workshop. I knew that we had to work on the changes procedures because we had been concentrating so much on new claims. The changes were at the stage where improvement was needed. The targets on the changes felt daunting and we were aware of the type of changes we needed to make to improve our targets,” Irene said. “We improved our processes by developing a process map. We put all our ideas up

on the wall and built it into a real, usable working plan.” Mari said, “This was an excellent process because it was the employees’ ideas that were being used – not just coming from the top down. The managers were looking at our ideas and I don’t think they had realised we could come up with so many of our own! We all started voicing our opinions and it changed everything for the better.” Both Mari and Irene said that the benefits processing staff are the ones who came up with the real ideas for change. The process changes were effective and have made an impact on the way Benefit Services manage change in circumstances now functions.

## CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

SPRINT fundamentally changed the way South Ayrshire Benefit Services works together. Irene said, "After the workshop, we wrote up the new procedures, and changed the processes for dealing with changes in circumstances and sent them out to all the staff and now we are improving. There are even more processes to change. Because of the SPRINT Workshop, we can now continue to identify the issues and work through them." Mari added, "Ideas are still coming forward after the workshop and things have changed since then. We can come up with ideas of what will make improvements, and management listens....also, we think we can reduce the number of days to process changes in circumstances even further."

Mari and Irene agreed that SPRINT was not just an average training course. "When you go to a training course with neighbouring authorities, in general we don't get much time talk to others regarding performance and we don't generally share ideas."

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Mari Alexander, Benefits Supervisor  
South Ayrshire Benefit Services

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## STAYING FOCUSED ON THE TARGETS

Mari and Irene discussed that the Benefit Services continue to improve in South Ayrshire. "We try to get word out to the community about Housing/Council Tax Benefit that they may be entitled to. For example, there was a joint initiative with the Pension Service regarding the Housing/Council Tax Benefit take-up and Pension Credit. We played a big part in letting people know that they may be entitled to more money. With Housing/Council Tax Benefits, we can take it back 52 weeks and help people realise that they've paid too much rent, too much council tax...its good. We're here to improve people's lives."

South Ayrshire is currently staying focused on achieving the targets for their new claims. The new claims process and new rent allowance claims must be accurate. "This can be very hard," says Irene. "You have to be on top and focused all the time with an accuracy rating of 99.2%. That's is what we have achieved." We also are trying to focus on finding reductions. Irene said, "We're half way through the year and we've achieved 42% - we're on course right now....and we feel confident that we can achieve 100%."

The time taken to process change in circumstances have improved as a result of the changes made at the SPRINT Workshop. "I would use it again [SPRINT]. We will use it again to set and define our new process with new targets definitely," Mari said.