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Cafcass Case Study

CAFCASS USE THE INNOVATION PROGRAMME TO STIMULATE CHANGE AND SUPPORT A NEW WAY OF THINKING

Executive Summary

Cafcass was amongst the first public sector organisations to join the Innovation Programme, when it was extended beyond the private sector at the end of 2014, along with Liverpool CCG. Then Director of Finance, now Resources, Julie Brown talked us through their reason for joining the programme:

“The membership and format of KnowledgeBrief seemed a promising combination to network and gain practical insight to other organisations’ work, as well as access to tools and frameworks to help tackle the challenge of running services under pressure.”

Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service), established in 2001, is a non-departmental public body. It exists to help to ensure that children’s welfare is put first during court proceedings. With a good overall and outstanding leadership rating from Ofsted, they help over 115,000 children and young people every year.





The KnowledgeBrief Innovation Programme:

- Has had an impact around the group of people for whom “innovation and product development is actually one of their core responsibilities”.
- Is stimulating change, by helping Cafcass “not to equate innovation with investment”.
- Gives Cafcass access to different parts of the sector, people and material and has “stacked up on the value for money basis”.

Challenges

In charge of a £120 million budget and chair of their internal innovation programme development board, Julie joined KnowledgeBrief’s Innovation Programme as someone who wants to encourage open-mindedness amongst a large staff group. Challenges faced are not only the size of the group, but also the fact that it is national and diverse, so there is a constant struggle to affect change across the whole organisation quickly.

Given that they are a body that try proactively to stay ahead and be forward thinking, ensuring this commitment is made all the way through the organisation is a complicated task. Julie is also conscious of coping with Generation Z, specifically “making sure you are cognizant of who your workforce of the future is”.

Being a public sector body, Cafcass are also aware that they are working through a time of having to do significantly more to support a growing population, with substantially less resource. Investment is drying up and that means Cafcass are in a position now where they may not be able to keep providing new services.

These are the core challenges that Julie had in mind when joining the Innovation Programme, and the programme has supported her in working through, alongside allowing her to cascade the information to relevant teammates across the organisation.

How the Programme Helped

Julie dives in with “the biggest impact we get from the Programme is having different conversations than the ones we used to... we are doing pilot work and we are trying out different things”. She puts the success down to their receptiveness and she herself is thinking about “things a lot differently – I’m exposed to more ideas and we do get to have the [necessary] conversations”.



She stated that the programme “impacted very quickly”, noting that “you always come away with something”, which she has been able to disseminate to the right people quickly. Developing this further, Julie says “When I go to the Innovation Day, I always bring something back; I share resources and then we trigger a conversation... we can get to a wider group of people and talk through what we think the main points were”.

Results, Return on Investment and Future Plans

Starting from the offset that she knew the Innovation Programme was good value for money, Julie goes on to say “it all comes together at the Innovation Days. We sit in a room of people, you’re looking at already filtered information (which is fantastic as we don’t have the time to do that filtering) and also combining the academic with the case study; so what you do in just the space of an afternoon is actually an intense piece of work if you want to get the most out of it, although it comes across in quite a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere”.

As someone who would highly recommend the programme, Julie says, “the success comes from what I would describe as intrinsic energy around the whole company. I’m impressed with the volume of information – the information gets filtered and disseminated. There is a pace and a momentum with the programme; all of the sessions are very coherent, well put together, really high quality input, and a good bunch of people to work within those sessions. How you’ve got that I don’t know – but you obviously have a formula that keeps that energy and momentum going around the Hot Topic”.

Specifically around return on investment, Cafcass have found it “a fantastic resource for the investment. It’s a great opportunity to network with the peer group around the subject and just generally anyway... it’s the people you come across, the quality of the material and the input”.

Looking to the future, conscious that investment is uncertain within the public sector, Julie has found the Innovation Days have allowed her to think differently around this issue. “What seems to be coming across was how you can be a responsible organisation as you stop investing in some things by making sure it gets taken up somewhere else... that for me was one of the messages around sharing data and collaborating, because if we can’t keep providing new services, can we empower some other part of the sector or society to do some of that work by proxy”.

Cafcass are clients of the KnowledgeBrief Innovation Programme. Learn more at www.knowledgebrief.com