



Business challenge

The Insolvency Service ran a suite of unintegrated case management systems that hindered business processes and its ability to deliver constituent services quickly and efficiently.

Transformation

The Insolvency Service is an agency with a mission: it helps people in debt make a fresh start. So when it decided to update its case processing systems, it engaged IBM® Services™ to build a modern cloud platform based on Microsoft Dynamics™ 365 Customer Engagement software, and now processes straightforward claims up to four times faster.

Results

Up to 4x the number of basic claims processed daily

using automated checks, data selection and bulk processing capabilities

Will harmonize 5 systems and integrate 7 applications

on a single platform with Microsoft Dynamics technology

Delivers unprecedented flexibility and business agility

by using cloud-based Microsoft tools and technologies

The Insolvency Service

Processing claims up to 4x faster with IBM Services and Microsoft technologies

Headquartered in Stratford, London, *The Insolvency Service* is an executive agency of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for the government of the UK. Among its many objectives and responsibilities are supporting businesses and individuals in financial distress, investigating financial misconduct and wrongdoing, maximizing returns for creditors, administering bankruptcies and other activities. The agency operates in 22 locations across Great Britain and employs roughly 1,500 people.

“The IBM Services project team worked tirelessly to develop and deliver the new Microsoft Dynamics-based case management system and worked well with our in-house delivery team.”

—Sharon Lewis, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, The Insolvency Service

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Keeping up with a changing landscape

For tens of thousands of financially distressed citizens in the UK, The Insolvency Service offers a beacon of hope.

The government agency offers debt solutions and services to individuals and employees of insolvent companies, and helps creditors get paid in cases of bankruptcy and liquidation. Just how many people the organization has supported is reflected in the numbers: in 2018, it issued its 250,000th debt relief order and returned over GBP 61.3 million in dividends to creditors. And in the last decade, it has provided more than GBP 2.3 billion in debt relief.

But providing that relief—and processing billions in payments—is complex. The agency's Redundancy Payment Services (RPS) business unit, which processes claims and calculates payments, handles as many as 80,000 claims annually and, on occasion, as many as 170,000. What's more, cases are getting larger and more complicated.

While the agency's primary purpose remains the same—to deliver economic confidence—the insolvency landscape in which it operates is changing. This requires The Insolvency Service to evolve its operations and the IT infrastructure supporting it.

"There are new forms of debt relief and new methods of dealing with insolvency being developed," says Sharon Lewis, Deputy Chief Operating Officer at The Insolvency Service. "So our ability to adapt and develop our IT systems in line with that is really important."

The agency's key IT systems included five disparate case management applications that all of the business units relied on for operations. The lack of connectivity resulted in data duplication and no single view of claimants or companies, making it difficult for case officers to glean actionable information. The IT infrastructure also included a host of back-end business systems for finance, documents, payments and other applications that were not fully integrated, making the speed and quality of the agency's service less effective than it could be.

For example, RPS case officers had to manually select which calculation to pay from two options presented by comparing data supplied by claimants, such as how long they've worked for a company, against data in wages records. Making changes was often time-consuming and expensive. System limitations made it difficult to process large quantities of cases without adding extra staff. Case officers had to track and record some business processes on spreadsheets to compensate for the limitations of the current systems,

restricting companywide visibility. Plus, there were specific sets of rules to follow.

Unless the agency took action, there was a risk that the limitations of its IT systems could negatively affect customers.

Recently, The Insolvency Service launched its Target Operating Model, One Service. Ultimately aimed at providing rapid and high-quality

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—Lydia Chown, Project Manager, Strategy and Change Directorate, The Insolvency Service

service to all its stakeholders, the strategy calls for pulling together the various business units to act as one by implementing key infrastructure changes.

"A fundamental building block of the strategy is bringing together our five case management systems," says Sharon Lewis, "so we have one version of the truth across the entire service."

Migrating to a modern platform

In May 2018, The Insolvency Service engaged IBM Services to help it start replacing its five case management applications with a single, modern platform based on Microsoft Dynamics 365 Customer Engagement software running on the Microsoft Azure cloud.

During a thorough procurement process, which began in February 2017, the agency examined multiple platforms and delivery partners.

"IBM Services was the highest scoring supplier against the tender evaluation criteria," recalls Lydia Chown, Project Manager for the Case Management Services Project at the agency. "And Microsoft Dynamics is so powerful and configurable. We were very keen on moving to the cloud for the additional flexibility and cost savings."

To minimize risk, the agency is replacing its systems in phases. Phase 1, which was completed in March 2019, focused on replacing a key case management system that supported RPS.

IBM Services led the project but worked closely with the agency's IT department. The objective was to transfer knowledge while designing and implementing the core platform, integrating existing business applications and migrating data.

Migrating the data was a significant undertaking and presented several challenges. For example, to consolidate duplicate claimant and company data into unique customer records, the team had to build complex matching algorithms. Migrating payments also required complex data transformations because the new payments process was significantly different from the previous one.

The teams overcame these issues with tools from the Microsoft Azure cloud service portfolio, including [Azure Data Factory](#), [Azure SQL Database](#), [Azure Key Vault](#) and [Azure Blob Storage](#) technologies. Using these services, the team gained significant flexibility and elasticity to scale up performance over traditional hardware SQL servers, and de-risked the migration process to meet the data migration time window required for achieving system go-live. And because the error handling capabilities of Azure Data Factory marked failed records, only those records needed reprocessing.

In total, the agency migrated roughly half a million contacts, half a million claims, 1.6 million payments and 2.8 million documents.

As part of Phase 1, the team also integrated seven of the agency's key business systems: two digital portals; finance, document management and document production applications; and a calculation engine. To securely integrate the systems in the cloud,

IBM relied on the [Azure Service Bus](#) platform, a queue-based mechanism for asynchronous integration, and [Azure Hybrid Relay](#) technology for point-to-point synchronous integration.

Combined, the flexibility, reliability, security and performance of Microsoft Azure cloud services enabled IBM Services to rapidly design and configure the platform with minimal customization. The platform is designed so that the client can change it as its business needs evolve. It also provides a solid foundation for the next phase of application consolidation.

Today [IBM Global Business Services® – Application Management Services](#) provides application maintenance and support service. “The support from IBM post go-live has been excellent,” says Lydia Chown. “Our lead support engineer is exceptional and works brilliantly with our teams.”

Helping those in need, faster

Throughout the first phase of modernizing its IT infrastructure, The Insolvency Service never lost sight of its ultimate objective: helping those in financial distress. And it succeeded.

With the platform's automation capabilities, case officers can process more claims more quickly than ever before, which means claimants are getting served faster,

too. Integration with key business applications delivers process efficiencies and visibility across all lines of business, enhancing the quality of constituent services. And the platform's flexibility means the agency can adapt itself and the technology as business—and the public's—needs evolve.

The changes make a real difference. In the past, when large cases came in, each claim had to be handled one by one because of system limitations.

“Now, with the new system's automated checks, data selection and bulk processing capabilities, an experienced case officer can process four times the number of straightforward claims in a day than they could in the old system,” says Lydia Chown.

As a result, when there's a sudden spike in workload, the agency doesn't need to increase its workforce. This frees up case officers to work on more complex issues and claims.

In a recent instance, RPS sent out 3,000 benefit letters in a single day that, until recently, it would have generated one by one. “So we've automated a whole new area of work,” adds Sharon Lewis.

The integration of key business applications, such as the calculation engine, also delivers flexibility and process efficiencies across the agency. For example, the platform automatically compares and selects

claimant data against wages records, eliminating the need to do so manually.

Sharon Lewis agrees: “One of the most powerful things about the platform is its flexibility. So if we need to adjust or change calculations, or get a new tax law, case decision, or piece of legislation coming in, we can adapt that much more quickly and that much more cheaply.”

That same system integration offers case officers unprecedented levels of visibility into important business processes.

“Business processes that were effectively dealt with off system are now part of the main system,” adds Sharon Lewis. “With employment tribunals, for instance, we can track the schedules and outcomes of tribunal hearings for thousands of people, and manage that case load within the system much more efficiently.”

Both Lydia Chown and Sharon Lewis point to IBM's expertise with Microsoft cloud services, proven delivery methods and collaborative working style for the success of Phase 1.

“The IBM Services project team worked tirelessly to develop and deliver the new Microsoft Dynamics-based case management system and worked well with our in-house delivery team,” concludes Sharon Lewis. “They are a knowledgeable and invested team.”

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Strategy and Change Directorate,
The Insolvency Service

Solution components

- IBM® Global Business Services®
– Application Management Services
- IBM Services™
- Microsoft Azure™
- Microsoft Dynamics™ 365

Take the next step

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