

**Our experience of working with communities and local partnerships shows that by taking a wider view your partnership can quickly make a real impact**

In the summer of 2009 Aperia worked with all nine of the Nottinghamshire councils and



their partners to understand the needs of the workless.

They wanted to dramatically improve the experience of unemployed customers who contacted them seeking support. In order to do this, they required a full understanding of the needs of these customers and an understanding of current service delivery across the public sector. To do this, they employed Aperia's Circles of Need® framework which provided an approach to

- engage with real customers to understand their actual needs and
- identify improvements to improve service delivery to better meet these needs and make better use of public sector resources.

**Project Background**

The local authorities across Nottinghamshire have ambitions to deliver an integrated first point of customer contact where this makes sense to the customer and where clear efficiencies can be achieved through such arrangements. In order to support the realisation of this vision, the local authorities established a project to look at improving the way that services were delivered across the county to citizens experiencing a key life event – specifically losing their employment.

“Aperia’s Circle of Need® framework provided an excellent approach to engaging with actual customers allowing us to understand their real needs. This has identified opportunities to improve service delivery to better meet these needs, improve the outcomes for our priority customers and deliver efficiency savings. We are now moving forward in implementing some of the recommendations to improve customer experience and the skills and method we have learnt through working with Aperia will allow us use this approach to tackle the issues faced by our other citizens.”

**Zoe Butler, Customer Services Manager, Ashfield District Council**

There was real enthusiasm from both managers and frontline staff to improve customer access to the services required to help meet their needs and return to work, rather than remain totally reliant on the public sector in the years to come.

The project focused on how and where true joined up working could improve service delivery to help meet the needs of Nottinghamshire’s unemployed citizens and make more effective use of limited public sector resources.

**THE PROJECT WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACHIEVE TWO KEY OBJECTIVES:**

- **TO DELIVER SKILLS TRANSFER ON THE CIRCLES OF NEED® METHOD SUCH THAT THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES COULD APPLY THE APPROACH TO DELIVERING OTHER IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

- **TO IDENTIFY ACTUAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SUPPORT OFFERED TO CITIZENS WHO HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS BY EITHER:**
  - **IMPROVING CUSTOMER OUTCOMES BY BETTER MEETING THEIR NEEDS AND HELPING THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR INDIVIDUAL ASPIRATIONS**
  - **IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF EXISTING SERVICES ACROSS THE PUBLIC SECTOR TO REMOVE DUPLICATION AND ACHIEVE SIGNIFICANT EFFICIENCY SAVINGS.**

## Approach

In order to deliver this project, Aperia's Circles of Need® framework was utilised across the local authorities to:

- Understand the needs and aspirations of citizens across Nottinghamshire who have lost their job
- Understand the current picture of service delivery to support these customers
- Engage with citizens to capture experiences and feedback in accessing and consuming these services
- Identify realistic improvement opportunities to improve outcomes, improve the customer experience and deliver efficiencies.

## Findings

Some of the key findings from the project were:

- All customers with whom the project engaged, were clear that their aspiration was to return to work as quickly as possible. Their priority needs were

“Economic Security”, “Improved Education” and “Adequate Housing”

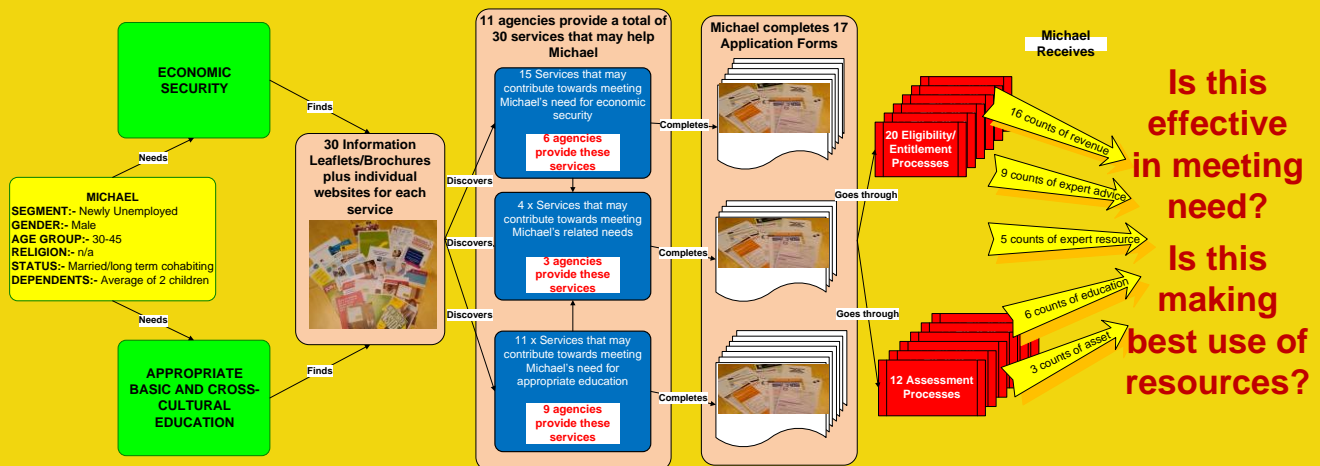
- Across the small section of the public sector investigated, at least 30 services are available which contribute to meeting these needs
- There is no definitive recognition of the range of services available to any one customer and only minimal examples of any signposting between organisations to help an individual customer - none of the customers or public sector staff engaged with were aware of all the services available to someone who had recently lost their job. Signposting within the authorities relied upon informal, rather than well controlled processes
- In order to access these vital support services, a customer is required to complete 17 separate application forms, be subjected to 19 separate eligibility checks and undergo 11 different assessments. This causes huge frustration and confusion to the customer, and evidences large scale inefficiency across the public sector

These findings are summarised in the diagram overleaf.

## Benefits

By undertaking this work the local authorities across Nottinghamshire have developed an in-depth understanding of:

- The needs of newly redundant citizens
- The services available, and the providers of the services to these citizens
- How well current service provision meets the needs of workless citizens



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This has been used to identify a significant number of realistic opportunities to improve the delivery of services to these customers by improving access to services, sharing information between organisations and reducing duplication by delivering joined-up processes and making more effective use of resources. These opportunities will generate efficiency savings, but also dramatically improve outcomes for citizens who have recently become unemployed by increasing awareness of the services available to better meet their needs and making it easier for these customers to access the support they require. These early pragmatic improvements will also lay the foundations for more transformational and even more beneficial improvements.

The participating local authorities have applied the method and are equipped to apply the thinking to other challenges and other segments across the sub-region.

### Next Steps

As a result of the work undertaken so far, the local authorities across Nottinghamshire are pressing ahead in developing a co-ordinated approach to signposting unemployed customers who contact them to the services that help contribute to fulfilling their needs and ambition of returning to work. This signposting will rely upon a single eligibility process across all 38 identified services, where currently there are 19 separate eligibility

checks. The approach will be made available via both web and face-to-face channels.

This will deliver significant benefits in removing this significant duplication seen and, therefore, reduce service delivery costs whilst also improving the customer experience in trying to have their needs met.

### Partner Authorities

The local authorities who participated in this project are listed below:

- Ashfield District Council
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Broxtowe Borough Council
- Gedling Borough Council
- Mansfield District Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Newark and Sherwood District Council
- Rushcliffe Borough Council

### Let's have a conversation

Please give us a call or email us if you would like one of our team to chat with you about Circles of Need® to see if we can help your organisation transform the customer experience AND save money.



[info@aperia.co.uk](mailto:info@aperia.co.uk)



01204 525262

[www.aperia.co.uk](http://www.aperia.co.uk)

Unit 2, Queensbrook  
Spa Road  
Bolton  
BL1 4AY