Warwickshire County Council Case Study

Managing Transport Services with Flexiroute

Background

Warwickshire County Council's (WCC) Transport Delivery team provides transport services for a number of other departments/ teams. Utilising the Flexiroute PlanRoute solution, they manage transport services for mainstream, SEN, CLA, Adult Social Care, post-19 SEN and concessionary travel.

The system is responsible for the effective management and booking of transport for 15,700 passengers annually, managing 1,100 contracts and 220 providers, in addition to 21 internal fleet vehicles. The digitalisation of the application process was extremely well received, with a 95% take-up rate and over 8,000 applications digitally processed in the first year.

Over 1,000 vehicles are allocated passengers in PlanRoute, managed daily by 6 members of the WCC team who are responsible for approximately 3 million journeys annually.

Over 20 staff use the system to handle the end-to-end process within one system, from queries to application forms, to the allocation of passengers onto vehicles, contract management and billing.

Before Flexiroute

Dan Jeanes, Network Manager at Warwickshire County Council graciously accepted our invite to share his feedback on what it was like to choose, implement and evolve with the Flexiroute system since it was first tendered in 2018. As part of our discussion, we were keen to understand what the transport management process looked like before Flexiroute.

Dan shared, "Previously, we had a longstanding contract (since 2001) with an outdated system that was no longer fit for purpose. The team here at Warwickshire are all quite 'techy', so we were keen to work with a team that understood our needs."

"When Dean (RLDatix, Flexiroute IT & Operations Manager) informed us that we could do online applications it was like all of our Christmases had come at once!"

As part of the specification, the team at WCC needed a solution that would directly integrate with their finance system and allow them to manage passengers, drivers, establishments, and contracts all in one place. Fortunately, the Flexiroute system offered another element that solved issues and saved valuable resources. Dan shared, "When Dean (RLDatix, Flexiroute IT & Operations Manager) informed us that we could do online applications it was like all of our Christmases had come at once!"

Why WCC choose Flexiroute

Dan described the PlanRoute system as 'a breath of fresh air' compared to previous systems that were archaic and awkward to use. He continued, "with PlanRoute, as long as you put in accurate data, the system will do the rest of the work for you.

Passengers are appropriately allocated and the information that comes out of the system is valuable and more importantly, correct."

The PlanRoute system is vast, and not all aspects are needed by every Council. Dan communicates regularly with the Flexiroute team about needs and uses within the system, ensuring the Council can reap the benefits without impacting their internal processes.

The PlanRoute system gives Local Authorities managing transport services everything that they need to digitally manage the end-to-end process.

Benefits of an Integrated Finance Module

One of the great benefits of the PlanRoute system is that it can work with a number of third-party solutions. WCC uses PlanRoute to export to their finance system, Agresso. This functionality enables them to schedule direct debits for paid transport easily and with minimal human interaction.

Dan explained, "following a successful transport application, the system automatically sets up the customer and transfers all relevant information into our finance system."

Reporting within the PlanRoute system is extensive and offers huge capabilities to interrogate data, providing valuable insights. WCC have benefited from a cost forecast report which is produced every month for the finance team.

Online Applications

There are six tailored application forms within the system, a key feature for WCC. This enables parents, carers and passengers to apply for mainstream, adult social care, CLA, SEN, paid transport and post-19 SEN transport services.

The online applications have been a huge time saver for the WCC team, who previously used paper applications that were sent out to parents in the post or electronically scanned and emailed.

Dan spoke positively about the impact that digital applications have had on the Council as well as the parents and carers. "Some parents would have to go through the task of manually completing the forms and posting them back to us, where others would try to complete them by editing the scanned document. This would have been near impossible to manage during lockdown."

Dan continued, "we're now able to offer a much more convenient process for people to apply for transport. Using the digital application forms, busy parents can return completed forms when it suits them, and the system can instantly review them against the eligibility criteria."

Convenience and digital systems have been high on the agenda for some time, boosted substantially by the worldwide pandemic that has forced many organisations to reconsider the way that they work. Managing applications digitally saves valuable staff time, unnecessary postage costs and most of all, gives flexibility to busy parents and carers who can now complete them anytime, anywhere across a range of devices.

"Prior to implementing Flexiroute, we would see a surge in applications between March and July and we needed five members of staff managing them. Now, we can manage the application process with a team of just two. This freed up the remaining staff to help with managing other areas of our transport process."

Dan Jeanes,
Network Manager
Warwickshire County Council

Working together for greater outcomes

RLDatix prides itself on excellent customer service across the whole group of companies (including Flexiroute). Our teams are always on hand for support and queries from any of our users.

Over the years, Dan has built a strong working relationship with us by providing regular feedback and suggestions for improvements. This feedback is invaluable as it gives us the opportunity to make changes that benefit all of our users.

"I often take the time to give my feedback to the developers which can lead to improvements in the system. My issues are resolved quickly and prioritised. Overall, the software is very user friendly, clear, simple and easy to use."

Dan Jeanes,
Network Manager
Warwickshire County Council

The Future with Flexiroute

We're proud to continue working with WCC to support their transport management now, and into the future. Our developers are working hard to create new updates to the system and solutions that will add further value to WCC and many other Local Authorities.

This will include our new Parent App, purpose-built to reassure parents and carers of the location and ETA of children arriving at school or home. This will work in unison with our Driver App, which enables GPS tracking and shares vital information with those that need it most. Dan and the team are particularly interested in our Personal Travel Budgets, which allows WCC to make payments to parents in lieu of providing the actual transport. T

his is designed to link with the finance system and automate the payment process so that payments are released to parents at the right time.

We're confident that we will continue to evolve with WCC and our many other clients to provide digital solutions to their transport management departments for many years to come.