



Focusing on Results at Somerset County Council

The Requirement

Information is the key to understanding achievement in a local authority's pupil population. Are achievement rates improving? Have new measures to raise exam results had an impact? Are there particular schools struggling to raise the achievement of their pupils? Are there any pupils being left behind? These are the questions local authorities ask themselves every day to ensure they are meeting the needs of all their pupils. Somerset County Council is one council that strives to do this task as effectively as possible.

The Council was an extensive user of **One PULSE v3** to analyse information about its pupils. When Capita Children's Services made the announcement that it would be changing to a new platform for **One PULSE v4**, Somerset was the first council to make the switch.

"It was crucial to have **One PULSE v4** installed and ready to use over the summer, which is our busiest time of analysis when all the key stage results are processed and so we agreed to be the first to upgrade," says Sue Harrison, Operational Manager. The Council was also keen to take advantage of the fact that **One PULSE v4** would make it easier to monitor pupil performance with its enhanced data analysis tools.

"Every council has to track pupil progress. It is a necessity. But it can take a lot of work and manual intervention to do it properly. My aim was to do it more efficiently."

**Sue Harrison, Operational Manager,
Somerset County Council**

The Solution

One PULSE v4 enables authorities to target greater pupil achievement by making it easier to spot trends in certain groups, regions, schools or key stages. It helps with decision making and identifies areas which need supporting with additional resources.

"PULSE v4 has a totally different look and feel from previous versions; it's so much more intuitive. It would be like trying to compare a Mini and a Rolls Royce," says Sue.

Benefiting the Council

One PULSE v4 makes it easier for authorities to check that standards are being met. They can examine the current results for a particular school or year group and compare this with past years' results to spot general trends. If a school has made particular improvements then their practices can be shared with other schools in the region. Likewise, if a school or year group is showing signs of underperforming, the Council will be alerted early on and can provide support.

"The results organiser is excellent as we can review results for a group of students and filter these findings by gender or by looking at those students with English as an additional language. In addition, you can look at much smaller groups of just a few pupils. If I wanted to check the attainment of all the children that were significantly hearing impaired, I could just pick out those 6 or 7 names and look at their achievement as a group. Before this was a pretty lengthy task to complete but is the sort of request that our statistics team are asked to do on a regular basis. This means that PULSE v4 is helping us check that we are successfully driving the achievement of all children," says Sue.

Benefiting the Council (contd)

Somerset County Council also has plans to make use of the GIS geographical mapping functionality of **One PULSE v4**. "More and more frequently we are working in regional hubs rather than as a central organisation. As a result, an education welfare officer will want to know the attainment and truancy rates for their particular area rather than on individual school or whole council basis." The Council will also be able to target pockets of deprivation more easily and see if any services directed at them are having an impact on results.

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Benefiting Schools and Pupils

"We have used **One PULSE v4** to undertake a research project for a group of young people who have received home tuition. These young people were initially identified using the system and the results and targets for all these young people were quickly pulled together making it easier to track the impact of the tuition," says Nicola Turner, Performance and Information Lead Officer.

The data is also extremely useful for schools evaluating their own performance and for those due to have an Ofsted inspection. The historical element to the data can track each school's performance over time giving a clear picture of their development.

And does Sue have any advice for other authorities considering the switch to **One PULSE v4**? "Make sure you prepare and get your infrastructure right. The software installation was relatively simple, but the planning took a lot longer to ensure we had the right hardware in place to support the new platform." The Capita Technical Services Team helped with this planning process. The Council also benefited from eight days of intensive training provided by Capita Consultancy Services. "Training was important so our team could take advantage of the new system in the shortest amount of time possible," says Sue.

"I am glad we made the switch to **One PULSE v4**. It is definitely saving time and is a much better product. I see real business benefits and I would recommend it to other authorities."