

Embracing the cloud to drive better outcomes

Amarjit Dhillon of Turning Point explains how he is working with Morgan & Wolfe to ensure service users benefit from collaboration between staff and partners

BY JACQUI GRIFFITHS



Every day, around 30,000 people across England look to Turning Point for support in turning their lives around. Set up 51 years ago, Turning Point has grown into a national organisation that provides personalised care for people struggling with substance misuse, mental health issues and learning disabilities, as well as working directly with employers through its commercial arm.

“We’re a social enterprise,” says Amarjit Dhillon, chief information officer at Turning Point. “Some people describe us as a not-for-profit organisation, but it’s more accurate to say we’re a not-for-dividend organisation. We are set up as a charity and have charitable goals, but we still have to pay for the office, staff and other bills, so we also have goals to survive as an organisation.”

Turning Point bids for work from government and related sources, providing services that would previously have been delivered by the National Health Service or local government. “Our margin expectation is much lower than that of a commercial enterprise, and that allows our solutions to be put forward and purchased using taxpayer funds without huge cost,” says Dhillon.

The organisation is working with Morgan & Wolfe, a provider of Microsoft Office 365 and SharePoint packaged intranet solutions, to achieve its goals. “Technology is important not only in addressing the demand we have today, but also in enabling us to continue reaching people and providing the support they need beyond the times when our services are open,” says Dhillon. “If our service is within arm’s reach of need – such as through a smartphone or TV at any point in time – that will assist the outcome for the person



requiring help, expand the demographics we can reach, and expand our hours.

“For example, if somebody comes into contact with the police, any previous mental health assessment should be available to them, to produce an appropriate outcome. Technology can help us provide that outcome at the point of need – even in the police car if we need to – so that person is put through the criminal justice system in a way that is appropriate for their needs. If we can prevent that person having a criminal justice cost associated with them or hitting expensive aspects of healthcare, that benefits the individual and society.”

Dhillon’s role is to help Turning Point in its transformation. “Working with partners such as Morgan & Wolfe will allow us to help people bring consistent solutions,” he says. “For example, someone operating in the north-east of the country might not be aware that somebody in the south-west has already been through the problem they’re trying to solve. Having a solution that allows us to collaborate – so people can see the stages others went through, access expertise on demand and read publicly available information – will not only foster improvement in what we’re doing now, it will also encourage innovation in service development. Turning Point’s people know what they are talking about so it’s really about accelerating that, incubating those ideas and bringing them into the marketplace, ultimately for the benefit of the people we support.

“Cloud technology has allowed us to bring solutions to bear in the business faster than we would previously have been able to, at a much lower level of investment. We can prove concepts much more quickly and scale things up if we need to. It’s not

about having something completely outsourced or completely in-house. It’s about a blended approach that enables a relatively small organisation like ours to work with partners that share and support our goals, and bring those solutions forward.”

The cloud is enabling Turning Point to expand its reach in terms of both the people it supports and expertise. “Cloud-based technology allows us to expand, not only in terms of reaching service users, but also in bringing in expertise from other geographies,” says Dhillon. “The Morgan & Wolfe solution enables us to integrate partners such as GPs, commissioners or other organisations into it, so we can exchange ideas and information. The cloud also helps us with mobility so we can reach individuals and collaborate with partner organisations, or other organisations that are interested in working with us.”

As a result, Dhillon says that technology has moved beyond a supporting role at Turning Point. “Technology still supports the business, but the reality is that it is an enabling function,” he says. “In the last 12 months we have been able to manage data and deeply understand what it means in terms of healthcare outcomes for our client base. That’s been possible because we’ve managed to pull that data from multiple sources into the cloud and we have the right permissions on that data. That will now start to inform the types of outcomes we want to be able to address in the future to help our societal goals. I can see a time when, if Turning Point wanted to, we could extend our reach beyond our geographical borders, collaborate with similar providers in other geographies, substantially increase the number of people we reach, and gain significantly more leverage on the resources we have today.” ■

Working with Morgan & Wolfe is helping Turning Point to put its service within arm’s reach of those who need it