

Department for Children, Schools and Families

Iron Mountain demonstrates ideal fit with government agency

Iron Mountain improves security and compliance by moving record repository of an entire government department from their ageing warehouse to a modern Iron Mountain facility, while drafting a Records Management Framework Agreement for all public sector bodies.

Iron Mountain's relationship with The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) predates the agency's transformation from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to its new title in June 2007.

Since 2003, through its provision of Record Management Solutions, Iron Mountain has been supporting the department in both its current and previous guise, in its goal of enabling all children and young people to reach their full potential. In 2006 the then DfES was becoming concerned about the physical condition of its storage facilities in Wales Bar, Sheffield. The ageing, Victorian factory warehouse had never been designed with storage in mind and was hindering effective access to the department's records.

"The building itself was unfit for purpose. It was never supposed to be a records store. There was lots of racking in the roof space which wasn't complying with health and safety regulations," says Edna Harrison, departmental records officer for the department.

In a bid to ensure the ongoing security of its records, the department took the decision to undertake the ambitious project of moving out of its existing facility and into a modern facility managed by an experienced contractor.

A tendering process was put in place and a short list was drawn up comprising three potential contractors, with Iron Mountain named as preferred bidder thanks to the success of the existing provision of Record Management Solutions. A project team was dispatched on a fact-finding mission to the Department of Health, where Iron Mountain had already implemented a comprehensive Records Management Solution.

"The Iron Mountain solution at the Department of Health seemed simple and well organised. They showed us how to call files up and how to put them away," says Harrison.



The tipping point for the department came after visiting Iron Mountain's storage facility in Warrington, just 15 minutes from the department's Runcorn headquarters.

““We were attracted by the fact that the Iron Mountain centre was purpose built for managing records. Iron Mountain demonstrated a great degree of professionalism and a real understanding of how important public records are,” says Harrison. **”**

In early 2007 the new contract was awarded to Iron Mountain. Over the following months the painstaking details of the move were worked out to ensure the transition would create the minimum of disruption. The scale of the move was considerable. The logistics would require moving 82,000 cubic feet of storage, comprising 750,000 files and 6,500 boxes.

The move began in March 2008 and over the course of the 17-week relocation, some 11,000 files per day were moved from the DCSF's old warehouse in Sheffield to Iron Mountain's dedicated facilities in Warrington.

In the meantime Iron Mountain was working on an in-house database that would not only give the department immediate access to records, but would also accommodate the DCSF's information storage and retrieval requirements over the coming years.

"The in-house system ensured we were able to bring every file from the old system over to the new one. It also meant we were able to accommodate longer record titles," says Harrison.

"Iron Mountain delivered a quality service and a good understanding of our requirements. We'd have no hesitation in recommending them to other governmental agencies."

In drafting the contract with the DCSF, Iron Mountain also formulated a pan-government Records Management Framework Agreement demonstrating its understanding of the specific needs of public sector bodies.

With the DCSF acting as the lead organisation, the framework agreement lasts a period of four years and is open for any contracting authority to join. By managing the full chain of custody, from record creation, retention and ultimately secure destruction, Iron Mountain can now design and deliver solutions via the framework to fit the requirements of government bodies.

"Choosing a supplier for records management services can be a costly and time consuming process for a public sector body. The options are either to go through an expensive and lengthy tender process, or to use the available resources more effectively and opt for a framework agreement," says Gordon Brockington, Head of Public Sector for Iron Mountain Europe.

Key benefits include time and cost savings as there is no need to advertise via the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), along with favourable agreed terms and conditions and price matrix for cost effective records management.

Looking to the future, agreements with public sector bodies under the framework agreement will allow for a certain amount of flexibility assuming the service order remains within the 'spirit' of the framework.



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