

# Case Study: Public Sector



## York Minster - Modern Rostering in a Medieval Setting

### Executive Summary

*York Minster is one of the great cathedrals of the world and a very busy hub and venue for people of all faiths. It is also a popular venue for a range of events and receives visits from high profile individuals including religious leaders, royalty and celebrities.*

*'York Minster Police Service' is a specialist police force for the Minster, employed to keep the buildings and the people visiting the Minster safe to be able to enjoy the beautiful buildings and serene environment. However, the Service personnel found itself over stretched and overworked with unpredictable work patterns and peaks and troughs in demand.*

*To improve staff rotas and reduce the reliance on overtime and lack of holidays the management team called in the experts at Working Time Solutions. Together they devised a rota structure that improved the work/life balance for its employees, while making the department easier to run and administrate.*

### Key challenges

- Busy, unpredictable working environment which required expert handling of a wide mix of visitors – general public and celebrities/royalties
- Long, consecutive shifts which left the staff over stretched and tired
- Over-reliance on costly overtime
- Unnecessary overlapping of shifts
- Too many consecutive weekend rotas
- Unpredictable holiday arrangements often changed with short notice

### Key outcomes

- Less management administration required
- Creation of a 'bank of hours' – reduces the amount of overtime required
- Predictable, shorter shifts
- Holidays guaranteed every nine weeks
- Better work/life balance for employees
- Less weekend work

### Key learnings

- Involve key personnel from the beginning of the process
- Take time to identify the challenges
- Allow plenty of time
- Be open to change

## Background

The Minster building encompasses vast beautiful spaces with visitors from all faiths and cultures from across the globe.

The prime role of a York Minster Police Officer is the security of the Minster itself and the surrounding buildings including the Police Office, St Williams College, the library and shop, Deans Park, the Church House and the Stoneyard. The Officers also provide a response service to a wide range of potential issues and incidents working in conjunction with security companies, North Yorkshire Police and Fire Service as required. They are also all trained in first aid to deal with any medical incident among visitors to the Minster.

Further duties included in the role are:

- Ensure the smooth running of the various events that take place on a regular basis
- Cash movement and uplifts from various departments and cash boxes
- Control of all access keys for the Minster
- Monitor security cameras
- Perform opening and closing procedures
- Perform security checks, alarm investigation, roof searches etc
- Accept deliveries for book shop and library via Police Office
- Other duties when required as called upon by Minster departments

As the Minster is a place of worship, issues with the public require sensitive handling and it is critical that the quiet relaxed atmosphere is not affected by any situations that may arise. High profile visits also require careful planning and a highly professional approach to ensure they are run smoothly and efficiently.

## The Challenge

To identify the challenges faced by the management and the force itself, Working Time Solutions met with representatives from all groups. It was clear from the conversations that all the Officers were very proud of their role and that they enjoy the community spirit within the Minster. As such they have all shown great flexibility in helping to cover each others shifts when required. A number of common issues were identified though:

- **Predictability** – changes to shifts are made with only two days notice sometimes less
- **Cover** – there are issues around cover with no slack in system which means that the team often work too many days due to absence or holidays. The Head Police Officer is supposed to work 9 – 5 which gives extra cover but often he has to cover absent shifts
- **Quick turnarounds** – there is a late shift followed by an early in the shift pattern making the team unnecessarily tired and stretched



- Consecutive shifts – the Force worked six or even seven shifts in a row on overtime, which is not only very expensive, but also very tiring for individuals
- **No holidays could be taken ‘on nights’** – this was due to the grouping of the night shifts
- **Weekend distribution** – the way the shift patterns were structured meant that the Officers had to work five consecutive weekends which was having a great impact on their work/life balance
- **Overlap** – the shifts were also designed to overlap by an hour, which most people agreed simply wasn’t required
- **The working shift pattern** – the week used to run Sunday to Saturday, but most people would prefer a Monday to Sunday shift instead

## The Solution

Once the key challenges had been identified, the Working Time Solutions team devised a rostering system that would tackle these issues head-on.

A shift pattern was created that featured rostered holidays, thus guaranteeing time off - previously leave was refused at times due to lack of cover. The holiday entitlement is now two weeks off in every nine-week cycle and extra cover is available by using a mix of shift lengths eight, nine and 12 hours which provides more time off and allows the two week break to be sacrosanct.

The number of consecutive shifts were also reduced and there was no more quick turnarounds in the pattern. There are less weekends worked in the pattern and they are more fairly distributed so that they are not all consecutive.

Manning was reduced to the required level of two officers per day reducing this to one overnight. This then created a reserve or bank of hours, which were paid up-front and to cover for sickness absence, training or even to increase the manning level for

special events. With more time off in the shift pattern there is more opportunity for cover with no extra cost being incurred, as the reserved hours can be used to take employees up to their contracted yearly total, without attracting an overtime premium.

## **The Benefits**

The new shift structure not only met the required business demand, but also the aspirations of the staff adhere to working time regulations. It is also easy to manage with a reduction in administration and management time.

Staff are now allowed more time off with guaranteed holidays and cover for absence, training or special events. There are shorter runs of shifts, therefore causing less fatigue than the previous pattern. There is also predictability in the shift pattern as the greatest cause for changes to the working hours was holiday cover.

For management, there is less administration and no authorising of holidays needed. It is easier for them to find cover if required and overtime costs are greatly reduced with rules in place for calling in staff using the reserve of hours.

Catherine Bourke, HR Manager York Minster, commented: "Working Time Solutions was of invaluable assistance to us through every step of the process. The team was consistently detailed, reliable, helpful and professional. We would be happy to recommend their services to any company considering changing shift patterns."