CASE STUDY

Identification and Verification -Northern Ireland Prison Service

Innovative tech combination empowers inmates and unlocks vital resource

NORTHERN IRELAND



The world is how we shape it

Introduction

Sopra Steria's innovative approach to linking biometric technology with prison appointment systems has transformed how Northern Ireland Prison Services (NIPS) manages the movement of prisoners in its high security environments. Prisoners are empowered to move securely within prison buildings independently, which has freed up vital time for staff to focus on rehabilitation and preventing reoffending.



Northern Ireland Prison Service

The Northern Ireland Prison Service works across three differing operational environments: High-security, medium-security and specialist Young Offenders' Provision. The ultimate aim of the service is to improve public safety by reducing the risk of reoffending through the management and rehabilitation of offenders in custody.





Challenge

To protect the safety and security of the public, prison colleagues and inmates, it is paramount that NIPS can verify the identity of every individual moving through its prison sites.

Specifically, NIPS required a more efficient way to move inmates through its sites and access accurate real-time data about the exact location of individuals, where they have been and when.

At peak times, prison staff need to manage and oversee the movement of large groups of prisoners, sometimes up to 300 people. This could be when prisoners are moving from one area to another to take part in activities, medical appointments or leisure time. The prison population in Northern Ireland is diverse, for instance a significant proportion do not speak English as their first language.

When it came to managing appointments, the organisation needed to modernise an admin-heavy system which required printing out appointment details, manually updating a database and physically escorting prisoners from a residential area to another location such as an activity centre. For the highest security, they needed live, real-time data about where all individuals were at any one time and this wasn't possible with the historic paper-based and manual data-entry systems.



Solution

Sopra Steria partnered with fellow criminal justice innovators, Lava Group, to develop a bespoke identification and verification system for NIPS.

Today, any individual entering one of the prison establishments will have their identity documents scanned and verified once and will have their photograph and biometric fingerprints taken. The information is instantly stored on a secure database and updates the central Causeway system used across criminal justice organisations in Northern Ireland.

Uniquely, the intuitive system is linked directly to the prisons' appointments system. Inmates' movements can be controlled and managed through this innovative combination of biometrics technologies and digital calendars. This means that prisoners no longer need to be escorted by prison officers from residential areas to appointments and activities. Inmates simply use their contactless ID cards and scan their fingerprint. If it is time for their appointment and they are who they say they are, the system will let them through the secure turnstile.



Sopra Steria ensured that information and guidance was available in all required languages and also in graphic form to cater to every individual using the system.

This system also provides management staff with live, real-time data about people's movements and exact locations. They can instantly see whether people are in transport and if they are in the correct area.

It is a priority for NIPS to encourage prisoners to engage in activities which support their rehabilitation. This innovative use of technology makes it significantly easier for the prisons to facilitate this in a controlled way, which ultimately benefits prison populations and colleagues.

Not only does this empower the 95 per cent of inmates who are able to move freely around the prisons, but it also means officers can focus their attention on the rehabilitation priority rather than menial and administration tasks.



Results and benefits

- Prison officers are no longer required to accompany every inmate to activities and appointments, reducing pressure on resources.
- Through detailed data analytics, the system can also be used to monitor and track other activity. For instance, the information available could be used for contact tracing to prevent the spread of diseases such as Covid-19.
- Real-time information and an accurate record of prisoner location, aids the management of prisoner activities and appointments.
- Greater control of an inmate's movement, where exit from and entry into specific areas is based on scheduled activities.

Sopra Steria has done an incredible job implementing a truly transformational digital project.

- ROBBIE BURROWS

Head of NIPS ICT Services at Department of Justice

More Information

At Sopra Steria we provide a bespoke range of Consulting, IT and Business Process Outsourcing services to Public and Private Sector organisations across the UK.

For more information on the services we provide to organisations in the Justice sector please contact Clare O'Sullivan at the details below:

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We look forward to working with you.





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