

enabling unprecedented public disclosure

Supporting public accountability with the Hillsborough Independent Panel

Atos has been closely involved in developing and implementing a new strategy and methodology for public disclosure of information. This breakthrough project has promoted openness and public accountability, and is proving to be a replicable model for Government.

Issue

Following 20 years of controversy about the Hillsborough disaster, the UK Government took the unprecedented decision to disclose all documents relating to what happened at Hillsborough on 15 April 1989.

In January 2010, the Hillsborough Independent Panel was established. Supported by the Hillsborough Secretariat, its remit was to:

- ▶ consult with the Hillsborough families to ensure their views were accounted for
- ▶ manage the process of public disclosure – initially to the families (unlike previous investigations)
- ▶ establish an archive of documentation, including a catalogue of all material
- ▶ produce a report showing how the information disclosed adds to public understanding of the tragedy.

Unlike other government inquiries, the Panel's objective was not to judge – but to achieve maximum-possible disclosure. Recognising the scale of the task, the Hillsborough Secretariat engaged a team from Atos to help devise and implement a disclosure strategy. With ambitious timescales and no template, the challenges were significant.

- ▶ With intense media interest and suspicion, coupled with the families' hopes, sensitivity and diplomacy were critical.
- ▶ Huge amounts of sensitive material (over 20 years old, in a wide variety of formats and conditions) would be difficult to locate, with little available digitally and volumes impossible to predict.
- ▶ Meticulous and detailed disclosure processes would need to be shared by organisations with widely differing cultures and priorities.
- ▶ With reputations at stake and no mandate to engage contributors, there was a risk of non-co-operation.



Bringing insight to resolve complex and sensitive issues

Solution

Atos worked tirelessly and seamlessly with the Secretariat to:

- ▶ devise methodologies and establish systems for this unprecedented process, from gathering thousands of pages of material digitally, to publishing it online
- ▶ establish enduring relationships of trust with every one of the 84 contributors
- ▶ engage with the Panel to devise and implement appropriate and robust redaction protocols that were used by every contributor
- ▶ help overcome legal complexities and other sensitivities uncovered through the research process
- ▶ support publication of the report, the material and the creation of a sustainable public archive.

Approach

With no appropriate government-approved secure technologies available, Atos identified a system that could be customised to meet such complex requirements, accessible to the Secretariat, the Panel and contributors

Atos trialled new systems and processes with three major contributors: the Home Office, the Crown Prosecution Service and South Yorkshire Police. This was invaluable in testing systems and processes, and benchmarking and trialling throughput.

By demonstrating such important contributors' involvement, Atos and the Secretariat encouraged others to participate. Many more were engaged, all on-boarded then closely supported at every stage by Atos.

Thousands of documents (reports, transcripts, witness statements, letters/memos, phone recordings, videos) came from widely differing contributors (central/local government, emergency services, individuals, private organisations, member groups, health services). With many contributors accustomed to protecting information, everything had to be achieved through persuasion and trust.

Interdependency between tasks was critical to achieve deadlines. Atos created an innovative plan that resonated with the Panel, keeping them on course and instilling confidence that deadlines could be achieved.

No publication of the findings was to take place before the families had seen them. As the date for public disclosure approached, the strength of the relationships Atos had established became critical in keeping stakeholders on board.

Having helped agree a web-publishing solution, Atos provided expertise to the website development team to ensure that the website met the requirements.

Benefits

The scale of disclosure was unprecedented. The Panel more than met its remit, delivering:

- ▶ a comprehensive report into the events at Hillsborough and their aftermath
- ▶ a permanent archive of over 25,000 documents
- ▶ more than 350,000 pages online, with full downloadable catalogue.

The Panel had successfully negotiated the publication of the truth for the first time - with wide acceptance of the process by the families, the press and general public.

The implications for society were profound and wide-ranging. Political support was cross-party, with full acceptance of the facts by all stakeholders. Major investigations into the roles of the police and the circumstances of the deaths were launched and new inquests ordered.

Why Atos?

Atos brought insight into the needs of all stakeholders, resolving complex and sensitive issues. The team worked seamlessly with the Secretariat and Panel to shape the focus and maintain momentum of the project. Atos' meticulousness, resilience, 'on-the-fly' problem-solving and readiness to work extremely intensively were all critical to its success.

The project set precedents, raised society's expectations for other similar reports in the future, and will drive public- and private-sector organisations to higher standards of accountability.

For Atos, the project was an important opportunity to demonstrate its own values of trust, excellence and innovation. It is just one example of Atos' ability to break new ground to support open data and transparency of public information.



“This work will have lasting effects in Liverpool, and on society. It would not have been delivered without the contribution of Atos. Atos worked seamlessly and tirelessly with us. They met every challenge with creativity, finding solutions every time. Atos provided the excellent business and technical support I had expected. But they added so much by working collaboratively with contributors, the Bishop of Liverpool and other members of the Panel.”

Ken Sutton, Director,
Hillsborough Secretariat

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