

CREATING A MODERN WORKING ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUPPORTS NEW WAYS OF WORKING



DfE's carbon footprint in London reduced by

50%

“The DfE saved £10 million per annum in rent and rates.”

In 2006, the then DfES undertook a pilot project to judge the effectiveness of introducing ‘New Ways of Working’ at their Sanctuary Buildings HQ in Great Smith Street. This later became a complete renovation of Sanctuary Buildings over six floors.

EC Harris has been a main consultant assisting with managing the DfE portfolio for fifteen years and there is a strong understanding of working arrangements and a partnering relationship. The project had three main deliverables:

- Reducing desk ratio to 8:10 and space to 9 sq.m per DfE London person
- Managing the project on time and on budget
- Managing change with the people at the DfE and introducing new ways of working.

The DfE previously had cellular offices, fixed desk spaces and approximately 13 sq.m per person. The working environment was old fashioned and did not support the Department's needs.

Creating Solutions

The DfE's vision was ‘a workplace with accommodation that reflected people's working needs not their place in the hierarchy’ (Andy Mills Project Manager for the Flexible Workspace Project).

An initial design concept for the pilot was produced, and the DfE Estates and Facilities Management Team worked closely with EC Harris and internal stakeholders to produce space-planning proposals for the whole of the main building.

A crucial part of the programme was decanting staff and providing continuity throughout the programme of works. The DfE controls a significant budget and with major programmes to deliver, the Department's work could not suffer.

Maximum value was achieved by rolling in several planned upgrades to the programme. Budgets for ceiling replacement and the upgrade and replacement of virtually all the M&E plant were agreed and EC Harris managed the whole programme as one.

Flexibility and trust played a big part and in the spirit of partnership, stakeholders worked with the design team to save time. There was trust from the DfE workforce too. By agreeing to short term discomfort and decant without lengthy negotiations they were promised that they would get their new accommodation and final improved workspace faster. In fact they got it six months earlier than planned.

Adding Value

- The reconfiguration resulted in 2250 staff being located in Sanctuary buildings as opposed to the original 1600. The pilot proved that a desk ratio of 7:10 was actually possible enabling an increase in capacity to 2574 staff, allowing the Department to react to future business changes with minimal disruption and cost. Indeed the DfE has saved £10 million per annum in rent and rates payments alone by vacating another office - Caxton House - which is no longer needed.
- Alongside the reconfiguration, EC Harris has been working with the DfE to reprocure and retender Support Services term contracts resulting in an annual saving of £1 million, and vacating a complete building has reduced its carbon footprint in London by around 50%.
- The workplace is now a bright modern office. IT systems support new ways of working and a key design feature is large murals that remind DfE staff of their mission.

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