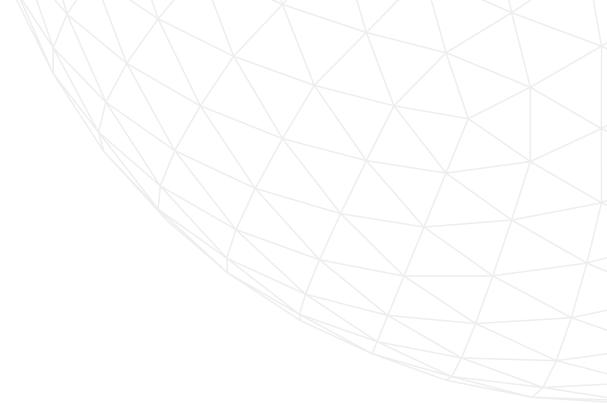




Totalmobile



## CASE STUDY

# Wales & West Utilities

Efficient shift work to support emergency response



We updated shift patterns, rotas and rosters for Wales & West Utilities' 300 emergency engineers so that it could meet new industry regulatory requirements.

The team used our shift planning, rostering and workforce management software and consultancy to help the organisation reduce its reliance on overtime and introduce flexible shift patterns for its emergency engineers.

## Key Challenges

- Outdated shift patterns for all employees.
- Significant regulatory changes.
- Over reliance on overtime.
- Mismatched employee scheduling; over-staffing and under-staffing for its emergency engineers when compared to in-day and seasonal demand.



## Key Outcomes

- Standardised and mandatory shift patterns, rotas and rosters for all employees.
- Reduction in overtime required.
- Improved shift planning, rostering and workforce management processes.
- Shift workers have better visibility of their shift patterns, rotas and rosters.
- Better work-life balance for emergency engineers.
- More efficient shift patterns that reflect customer and regulatory demand.

# Key Learnings

- Software provides impartiality when analysing demand and capacity or workload data.
- Set clear objectives at the beginning and keep referring back to them.
- Communicate clearly, consistently and constantly.
- Set-up a dedicated working group to own and drive the project with Executive level leadership.
- Involve representatives from all areas of the business from the beginning.
- Regular and positive employee engagement.
- Early engagement with Trade Unions and affected shift workers is crucial.
- Invest time in getting the demand and capacity data right and agreed up-front.
- Give people time to understand and, where necessary, challenge the shift pattern changes suggested.
- Utilise a third party such as Working Time Solutions for expertise, objectivity and best practice shift planning, rostering and workforce management solutions.

## Our Customer

Wales & West Utilities - formerly part of National Grid Transco - was launched in 2005 and is a regulated gas distribution business serving 7.4 million people in Wales and South West England. At the time in question, the organisation employed 1,450 people, 600 contractors and exists to operate, maintain and develop a 35,000 km gas distribution network across its region. It provides a gas emergency service and deals with 100,000 calls a year servicing 2.5 million supply points in the area.



## The Situation

Outdated working arrangements across the board, regulatory changes and workload demands for its 300 emergency engineers meant that Wales & West Utilities needed to review, overhaul and update the way in which it operated. The organisation wanted to reduce its reliance on overtime and modernise its organisational structure. It wanted flexibility for its emergency engineers, as well as employee terms and conditions for all staff to ensure it was fit to match future demands and requirements.

Wales & West Utilities needed to update its shift patterns, rotas and rosters for its 300 emergency engineers to meet new industry regulatory requirements. The organisation also wanted to streamline its shift planning, rostering and workforce management practices for this group to ensure it was meeting demand in a more cost effective way while reducing the requirement for hours worked outside of formal shift patterns (overtime).

Current workforce agreements for all shift workers also needed modernising to ensure the business was fit for the future. Facing these challenges, as well as a heavily unionised workforce, we were called in to support the management team and provide expertise and insight right from the start. We guided Wales & West Utilities through the process with cost savings and better shift planning, rostering and workforce management processes as a result.

# Our Role

The team recognised right from the beginning that well established and constructive relationships with the trade union was key to success. The organisation took an engaged approach to the project by focusing on face-to-face meetings, briefings and roadshows to ensure that management and WTS were both visible throughout the process.

This also gave the team a 'face' and somewhere for the engineers to direct questions and thoughts. To ensure early buy-in and to reach agreement on the task at hand quickly, the project was kicked-off with a data workshop analysing shift pattern and demand profile information as available and making sure nothing was missed or misconstrued.

A number of other workshops were arranged throughout this period to share information, gain feedback and reach agreement. These sessions involved a cross section of affected staff and managers, and covered everything from reviewing demand and capacity data and resource matching, to the development of shift patterns and recommendations for employees, which were agreed through a ballot vote.

There was also a series of fortnightly meetings arranged between Senior Managers and Trade Union colleagues to discuss the framework within which the new shift patterns would operate once in force and to agree the 'rules'.

Following this intensive six-month process, Wales & West Utilities successfully implemented new shift patterns, rotas and rosters. The new shifts are compulsory for all its emergency engineers and cover a seven-day week, 24 hours per day and offer more flexibility than previously, incorporating both "flex shifts" and banked hours.

The data analysis had pinpointed an employee scheduling mismatch with staffing shortfalls during certain periods and under-utilisation at others. The new shift patterns re-allocated resources in a manner to more efficiently meet the peaks and troughs in demand and also led to a reduction in requirements for overtime.

The company also standardised its T&Cs for all its staff; this included holidays and start and finish times to make it easier to administer and run.

# Outcomes

As a result of introducing more flexible patterns, the organisation was able to downsize its manpower on a volunteer basis.

The remainder of the emergency department is now operating in a more efficient way with shift patterns, rotas and rosters more effectively covering workload demands.

There has also been a demonstrable reduction in overtime and hours worked on standby arrangements.

The internal shift planning, rostering and workforce management process is also much more streamlined and effective with a more transparent system in place allowing better foresight for both the organisation and the employees.

Peaks and troughs in demand are now managed better across the business with significantly improved flexibility.

From the engineers' point of view, they now have better visibility of their shift patterns, rotas and rosters and rest days making it easier for them to plan their spare time promoting a good work-life balance.

The team set a tight six-month deadline for the project, while adopting a flexible approach to cater for the needs of different groups to ensure they were engaged in the process and on-board.

# Benefits

- Standardised and mandatory working patterns for all employees
- Reduction in overtime required
- Improved planning processes
- Employees have better visibility of their working patterns
- Better work-life balance for emergency engineers
- More efficient shift patterns that reflect customer and regulatory demand

"Working Time Solutions is a key partner that's helping us maintain a highly flexible, productive and efficient workforce. They support us across numerous operational areas from compliance monitoring to tactical and strategic planning. They have allowed us to provide our highly-valued workforce with more certainty around working hours and additional flexibility to meet their work-life balance needs, while making sure our labour supply and demand is completely aligned and we can reduce unnecessary labour costs."

***Andrew Hopkins, Director of Operations, Wales & West Utilities***



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To learn more about our products & solutions , visit

**<https://www.totalmobile.co.uk>**

or contact us via the details on the back of this document.



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Totalmobile is market leader in field service and mobile workforce management technology, helping organisations deliver more service, of the highest quality and at reduced cost.

Our SaaS based software provides a range of innovative products that deliver a step change in field service performance, mobile worker empowerment and management control.

This unlocks transformative cost savings, capacity gains, productivity improvements and empowers allows mobile workers to focus on consistently delivering the best service.