

# Caerphilly Council use intelligent automation to accelerate supply of free school meals

Submitted by: Hall Communications

Tuesday, 16 March 2021

---

Marcus Rashford's phenomenal success in championing the free school meals initiative for vulnerable children has placed unprecedented demand on frontline services staff throughout UK local authorities. Forward thinkers at Caerphilly Council saw this as a golden opportunity for service improvement – especially the time-critical, free school meal process and are using intelligent automation capabilities to ensure that no child in the region goes hungry during the pandemic.

For the council's catering service team, dealing with increasing numbers of free school meal applications, while ensuring that every eligible child receives their weekly bundle of 5 nutritious meals with loaf of bread, 1 litre of milk, a fruit and vegetable bag, could take up to 5 days per application.

The council took swift action by using the expertise of intelligent automation services provider Codebase8 to re-design, optimise and accelerate its end-to-end, free school meal process. Working with the council, Codebase8 applied the capabilities of Blue Prism's intelligent automation technology running digital workers (smart software robots) that perform work across front, middle and back office operations - at a speed, accuracy and integrity unmatched by humans – and any other technology.

Codebase8 deployed and trained the digital workers to instantaneously process free school meal applications being submitted by parents/guardians. Digital workers open the application and copy all information into the council's content management system – onerous work that was previously being manually performed by council staff. The system connects with the Department of Work and Pensions, the application is assessed, a decision is made and the response automatically emailed to the citizen.

Eligible children are now being accepted onto the programme the same day, and families can even check the status of their application while they wait. As the digital workers provide 24/7 work capability, any increase in demand doesn't affect service delivery, so vulnerable children can still receive meals delivered direct to their doorstep at a time when they need it most.

Liz Lucas, Head of Digital Customer Services Caerphilly Council said; "The Covid-19 pandemic has the double-edged effect of creating higher demand for council services and reducing staff availability. Automation enables us to keep critical services functioning and Codebase8 are the critical strategic and technical enablers of this. They've really reinstated our confidence in automation by helping us identify its potential capabilities so we generate great results; including improving efficiency and enhanced service levels to customers – all of which are being achieved in a short time period."

Ultimately, by automating the free school meals process has enabled the council to re-invest savings back into the business, improve staff morale; increase data input accuracy and improve the speed of the overall application process. The council's catering services can also re-allocate staff resources from administrative work to other critical roles required to keep this very busy section running efficiently.

Jason Miles, Digital Services Programme Lead, Caerphilly Council adds; "Our ethos has been to implement intelligent automation to deliver impactful and meaningful social benefits for our residents. There can be no greater example than a child requiring a hot healthy meal, whilst also providing positive improvements in health, attainment, social cohesion and also helping families with the cost of living. The free school meals process perfectly aligned with our intelligent automation strategy - it ticked all the boxes and removed a repetitive and mundane task from catering services - all without the need for human intervention."

Craig John, Technical Director at Codebase8, concludes; "This delivery has certainly played on emotions when hearing about some of the tribulations families are facing in the height of the pandemic, but it's also deeply fulfilling to see how Caerphilly Council has stood up to adversity. It's great to see digital innovation delivering a positive impact to people's lives, and if you ever wanted a case study of what can be achieved when you put people at the heart of an automation strategy, then this is one"

.....

#### About Codebase8

Codebase8 lead at advancing and applying cutting-edge digital innovation so any organisation can swiftly gain advantage by easily identifying and solving evermore complex, known and unimagined, work challenges - across front to back office operations.

Codebase8 achieve the seemingly impossible, by designing new ways working much faster, smarter, more efficiently - with less. To realise this, Codebase8 has created a unique 'Connected Intelligence' model. This novel approach combines the best human, artificial, robotic and systems intelligence as a single capability to conceive, conceptualise and deliver 'enhanced work' solutions that release unmatched value in months - rather than years.

As well as swiftly achieving vast time, resource and capital savings, organisations experience greater operational agility, performance and efficiencies – while creating high value growth opportunities that exceed stakeholder demands.

Since it's formation in 1992, Codebase8 has built a passionate, highly-skilled, team of data scientists, software engineers, automation experts and visionaries who have delivered bespoke, business-aligned, innovations for over 100 UK and European public and private sector organisations. Following its recent acquisition by Davies Group, Codebase8 now has the resources to extend its capabilities across the globe.

<https://codebase8.co.uk>