

Commerce Decisions supports the Commissioning Business Service Healthcare Contracting Team in procuring support services for the Salford Primary Care Trust

Customer profile

The Commissioning Business Service (CBS) was created by the Association of Greater Manchester Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to assist them in the development of commissioning activities as an NHS stand-alone agency along management consultancy lines supporting healthcare services. The CBS has four specialist teams supporting commissioning.

The CBS Healthcare Contracting Team (HCT) provides specialist public sector procurement, legal and market management support to commissioners responsible for delivering better healthcare services. They provide support in understanding the needs and requirements of the PCTs, delivering advice and assistance based on up-to date legislation, market intelligence and lessons learnt.

The CBS has built a team of qualified people, trained in strategic procurement management, project management and legal services, all working in the NHS and across dedicated organisations in the public and independent sector. They have been working effectively with commissioning organisations and have delivered more than 40 healthcare projects, in association with the individual Primary Care Trusts, Collaborative Groups and Networks. The team's expertise and processes are underpinned by the use of cutting-edge tendering and e-evaluation tools.

Project overview

The CBS was commissioned to support Salford Primary Care Trust Commissioners in market-testing the Young People's Sexual Health Service and to select a preferred provider to deliver this service in Salford for the next three years.

An assessment of the market was first undertaken to determine whether there was sufficient interest, capacity and capability in the market to deliver a redesigned, young-people-focused, innovative service.

Through market assessment it was determined that there was a limited but diverse mix of potential providers in the market. The commissioners decided to go out to tender

for a redesigned young-people-focused service, which was both fit for purpose and cost-effective.

A multi-disciplinary evaluation team was established, which included young people's representatives as well as representatives from commissioning, procurement, finance, human resources, external operational management, the Council for Voluntary Services and the Local Authority.

Project procurement challenges

The key challenges of this project were:

- to encourage competition and demonstrate openness and transparency to both the market and to current providers of the service
- dealing with a complex set of requirements
- ensuring that the project met the objectives of a large number of stakeholders
- coordinating a geographically dispersed multi-disciplinary evaluation team
- managing a significant number of documents and volume of data that needed to be accessed easily and rapidly
- ensuring the effective debriefing of the bidders



Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

The CBS has an enterprise-wide agreement with Commerce Decisions for the use of AWARD® software. Consequently, Commerce Decisions was involved at the beginning of the project with the market assessment to determine whether there was sufficient interest, capacity and capability in the market to deliver a redesigned, young-people focused, innovative service.

"We worked very closely with the Commerce Decisions consultants to help us set this project up and they played a crucial role in developing the approach. The support we get from Commerce Decisions is very professional and the AWARD® system always delivers"

Lesley Kippax, Strategic Procurement and Market Manager, Greater Manchester Commissioning Business Service



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The tender was advertised under the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) restricted procedure and a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) was used to ensure that all shortlisted bidders were sufficiently qualified and experienced enough to provide the service. AWARD® software was used to score and evaluate the PQQ, from which four suppliers were invited to tender.

“We use AWARD® for all of our projects at the CBS. On this particular project, because of its complexity, Commerce Decisions helped us to build the multi-lot Invitation to Tender (ITT),” said Lesley Kippax.

Following the ITT, three bidders were shortlisted and their responses were loaded into the AWARD® repository to start the evaluation. Following a ‘Train the trainer’ programme, the CBS team briefed the 12 evaluators before the evaluation took place.

AWARD® was used to score electronically at every stage of the bid evaluation. It allowed each panel member to score separately and then come together to discuss significant disparities in the scores and to agree a consensus. At any stage of the evaluation using AWARD®, the project team could see the progress of each of the evaluators.

“AWARD® hugely speeds up the evaluation process, providing a robust outcome. It is so much easier than using a paper based system. It increases the efficiency of the procurement, is easy to use and gives us an update on progress in real time. It enables us to manage a geographically and very diverse group of evaluators. The feedback from the evaluators themselves on AWARD® has been very positive,” said Clare Houghton, Procurement and Market Manager, Commissioning Business Service.

Using information generated by AWARD®, the CBS created an Award Recommendation Report, which was issued to the evaluation team for approval before being sent for PCT approval. Every member of the evaluation team voted to accept the award recommendation.

To complete the procurement, each unsuccessful bidder was offered a written debrief report based on information drawn from AWARD®.

“AWARD® played a central role in enabling us to be able to deliver a successful contract, meeting all the appropriate governance arrangements. The software has proved itself to be an invaluable tool for our procurement projects,” said Lesley Kippax.

“AWARD® is an excellent tool for managing projects, particularly complex ones involving multiple stakeholders and multiple evaluators,” said Clare Houghton.

AWARD® Benefits

AWARD® delivers a transparent audit trail that underpins the bidder debriefing process and manages any challenges to the outcome of the procurement.

AWARD® is highly flexible, enabling full integration of the tender requirements and policies.

AWARD® enables project users to be managed centrally, optimising the time spent on evaluating suppliers.

AWARD® is delivered via a security accredited hosted service. Users can access AWARD® from any workstation with an internet connection and web browser.

Powerful reporting capabilities allow a range of selected reports to be generated quickly and tailored to your project.

Enhanced controls allow better management of tender stages leading to efficiencies and on time project delivery.

AWARD® provides a structured and compliant approach to the execution of a procurement.

