

Healthcare team fit for the future after CIPS assessment

The NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) provides a wide range of services in a complex procurement environment.

When NHS restructuring led to the influx of new people with different ways of working and an audit flagged up areas for improvement, the CSU seized the opportunity to review and refine its systems and processes. **CIPS' Procurement Excellence Programme** supplied the ideal framework to guide its development journey.

“

The CIPS accreditation process has been rewarding and reflective. It has made us a better procurement function and provided us with the rigour to explore areas for improvement and innovation.”

Beverley Thomas

Head of Procurement and Corporate Services, NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit

 **CASE STUDY**
PROCUREMENT
EXCELLENCE
PROGRAMME





Complex challenges

Nine health systems covering 25% of England's population, together with NHS trusts and clients across government, health and social care, benefit from the CSU's expertise. Its professional support is sought on everything from competitive procurement exercises to supply chain issues and strategic spend analysis to category and contract management.

The CSU's main challenges relate, as they do for so many, to cost pressures, sustainability issues and regulatory compliance. The unit also has to comply with NHS England's procurement guidelines. In addition, its continued success requires a constant watch on what's happening in the wider procurement world and bringing best practices into the organisation.

The CSU has long looked to CIPS to help with these challenges and commitments: its senior procurement managers and officers have all achieved MCIPS or are working towards it. In 2019, the CSU turned to CIPS' Performance Excellence Programme as the next logical step in its development.



Fresh ideas

Choosing the Programme for the structure, depth and breadth of its assessment, the CSU was keen to test its processes, policies, procedures and people against the CIPS global standard.

The assessment behind its first Performance Excellence Award resulted in some valuable changes. These included a more professional contract management process and regularly refreshed policy notes which act as a quick, helpful alternative to the existing vast technical manual. The team also overhauled its key document templates and set up a working group to ensure ongoing changes suggested by the team and clients are discussed and incorporated.

When it came to reassessment two years later, the team was keen to understand how organisational changes and Covid had impacted its performance and what areas to look at afresh. With the CSU able to provide comprehensive answers and evidence for the CIPS Assessor faster this time around, these learnings emerged quickly.

The benefits:

The CSU describes the Performance Excellence Programme assessment process as extremely worthwhile, enabling it to:

- Overhaul its processes and systems in line with global best practice
- Enhance morale and personal development by giving team members the space to reflect on its practices, understand what good looks like and help introduce changes
- Reduce costs and risks and wasted time through smarter working methods
- Use the Award logo on bids and professional documents for valuable differentiation
- Increase its profile and promote the quality of its work to internal and external clients
- Gain more work from internal customers due to its greater credibility and their greater trust
- Increase its attractiveness as a procurement employer
- Create competitive advantage by introducing a framework for continually reviewing and refining every aspect of the services it offers.



Far-reaching results

The CSU singles out three overarching outcomes that it believes will underpin its continued development.

The team reports that it now has more control, citing how robustly new processes such as those for contract management and template development are working.

It also highlights how the visibility of the procurement function has grown across the organisation. Improvements set in motion by the assessments and achievement of the Performance Excellence Award have been consistently communicated via team briefs, the internal portal, social media and the Senior Leadership Forum.

Finally, the CSU says it has become more confident - and, as a result, more proactive when it comes to the organisation's wider agenda. It is now, for instance, heavily involved in the sustainability group and made a notable input into the green plan it had advocated for. This work has already led to improvement in the CSU's own audit trail.

“

We continually review the Performance Excellence Programme assessment process and this ensures organisations are always stretched a bit at each reassessment and are keeping their policies and procedures up to date”

Chris Sykes

CIPS Assessor

CSU provides procurement services to **9 health systems...**

9

with a total healthcare spend of **£14.9 billion**

£14.9bn

27 people in the CSU procurement team...

27

involved in annual procurement spend by internal and external clients of around **£25m to £250m**

£250m





The CIPS Procurement Excellence Programme is an independent and comprehensive assessment of your procurement team function designed and delivered by world-class, leading experts.

- Globally recognised award
- Demonstrates how well your procurement function is performing against an internationally recognised standard
- Helps your organisation build a function fit and ready for future challenges



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