

## Student placement management agency project – University of East London

### Description

Each year the NHS makes student placement opportunities available to HEIs in the London area that deliver courses for allied health professionals in these subjects: occupational therapy, operating department practice, physiotherapy, podiatry and speech and language therapy.

Before this project was delivered, each institution managed its own system for finding placement opportunities, matching students with offered placements, tracking these placements and reporting on them to the NHS. This administrative burden principally fell on academic teaching staff.

Following completion of this project, the participating institutions operate on a common Placement Management Agency (PMA) platform where the NHS and private clinics plug their opportunities in at one end and institutions match candidates and report at the other.

### Benefits obtained

In the first full year of operation four disciplines used the service: Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and language therapy, and Podiatry. In the current year there was a requirement for 5,066 placements and 4,998 offers were received, a 99% success rate in matching applicants with appropriate offers. Some 75% of these offers were matched to students using the new PMA system.

The new PMA has provided a far more efficient process that is much more effective at placing students, reduces the burden on academic staff, improves the student experience, keeps records of student training and provides concise management information to each institution.

### Critical success factors

Collaboration was required between the dozen stakeholders across London, including NHS London (which supplied funding), and all the HEIs previously administering their own separate placement schemes.

Clear roles and responsibilities were required. The University of East London was selected as the lead institution and had to manage the expectations of these diverse stakeholders and bring a fully implemented and working system in on time and within budget.

Good risk management was crucial. There was a need to build an IT solution from scratch to satisfy the requirements of the project for this unique proposal. There was no existing supply market and so there were some significant risks.

## How procurement added strategic value

A procurement-led approach was adopted to test the market and obtain the most successful outcome. This was controlled and implemented by the Procurement Team at the University of East London working closely with academic colleagues.

The commercial expertise in the Procurement Team was able to obtain a result that fulfilled both academic and administrative needs. It also delivered a working partnership that was sustainable in the long term and could be controlled on an ongoing basis by clearly defined KPIs.

The Procurement Team engaged with suppliers to create a competitive market in which a tender could take place and ensured value for money was obtained.

Using funding from an external provider, the Team were able to partner with the successful bidder to deliver a service that eliminated duplication and provided process and cost efficiencies to all stakeholders and, just as importantly, an improved student experience.

## Commendation

*“The success of the Student Placement Management Agency showed Procurement in a new light and demonstrated the very considerable added value that the function brings to solving critical business challenges confronting the University”*

Dusty Amroliwala, Chief Operating Officer

Source: '[Procurement as a strategic asset in higher education](#)' report produced for the Efficiency Exchange by John Lakin, July 2013.