



The Lighthouse Schools Partnership

The Lighthouse Schools Partnership (LSP), was founded in 2016. It's a large Trust made up of 30 schools – 26 primary and four secondary – all located within the South West fringe of Bristol. Combined they have 13,500 students across their schools; more than many universities.

Background

The Trust was initially formed by six schools and grew rapidly. Over time, they inherited various catering and cleaning providers and contracts. At one point, they had four outsourced catering providers plus an in-house provision across the Trust, each with varying operating models which had become complicated to manage.

LSP identified a clear need to understand if their commercial deals were competitive and also to explore whether it was feasible to streamline their operations by contracting a single catering provider.

LSP also had schools on different cleaning contracts, and some providers were performing poorly. They also wanted to consolidate the cleaning arrangements, understand all the options available and perhaps get to a point where they could run a competitive tender to appoint a single cleaning provider.

Brief

On the catering side, Litmus were briefed to complete a benchmarking exercise on LSP's existing catering provision which delivered metrics that allowed the Trust to understand how its cost and specifications compared to sector specific market averages. Following this, LSP took the decision to move over to one central Trust contract. Litmus were subsequently engaged to manage a full competitive catering tender for all schools within the Trust.

On the cleaning side, we were briefed to initially facilitate a transformation project with the better performing cleaning providers and then manage a competitive tender.

Approach

Following the benchmarking exercise, it became evident, very quickly, that there was a clear opportunity for LSP to move to more cost-effective agreements with their catering providers. This helped LSP create some commercial competitiveness between the providers, who were invited to submit proposals to become the sole catering provider.

Litmus managed the entire transition process, and successfully centralised all the schools to one provider for the remainder of the contractual term. This resulted in savings of c£200,000.

►► We've worked with Litmus Partnership since we began in 2016 – and in fact, our Founder worked with Litmus even before that – so the years of working together speaks for itself. Litmus have become a trusted and invaluable part of our team and have completely overhauled our operation for the better. They understand Multi-Academy Trusts, the challenges we face and are always robust in their recommendations. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend working with Litmus."◄◄

Tim Monelle, Director of Trust Services,
Lighthouse Schools Partnership

Once the contract term expired, Litmus then ran a competitive tender, which included writing the tender specification documents, analysing the proposals, advising LSP on the pros and cons of each bid. In the end, LSP were able to appoint a single contractor who aligned with the specification and which has delivered not only a great, collaborative partner but also excellent commercial terms.

Litmus also supported LSP during Covid, who were helping to feed vulnerable people within their community through their local supply chain. At one point, around 700 food hampers were being produced a week and distributed to those in need. It worked so well that another School, outside of the Trust, requested help with the preparation and distribution of hampers too. Litmus also supported LSP in furloughing staff, and the costs that weren't covered by Government funding were able to be partly recovered.

On the cleaning side, due to the poor performance of two of the cleaning providers, Litmus helped LSP to consolidate the work to a single provider. At the end of the contract term, Litmus then managed a competitive tender process, which has seen all schools placed with one cleaning provider who is performing very well.

In addition, when the cleaning bill increased due to enhanced cleaning procedures during Covid, Litmus managed a contract variation which helped steer LSP through cost increases.

Litmus also successfully ran a Grounds Maintenance tender, and LSP have recently invoked the optional contract extension.

Outcomes

All 26 primary schools now have the same menu, from one catering provider, resulting in consistency across all sites and a far more streamlined management process for LSP.

On an ongoing basis, Litmus monitor the catering and cleaning contracts for LSP, something which many clients simply don't have time to do. This ensures that LSP always receive the contracted hours and any unused hours are credited back. During Covid this amounted to £100,000 worth of under-delivered hours.

Litmus has built an excellent relationship with all the key stakeholders within LSP and are continually looking at how the operations can be refined to improve value and maximise LSP's return. For example, Litmus is currently reviewing changing to evening cleans which could bring savings totalling in the region of £250,000.

For more information about Litmus get in touch:

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