



Affinity Learning Partnership

Affinity Learning Partnership is a Trust based in and around Burton-upon-Trent, comprising four secondary schools and three primary schools. The Trust believes that all children and young people in its care should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and achieve highly, regardless of their ability or background. As it looks to grow, the Trust is focused on ensuring consistency and value for money across all their key contracts.

Background

Affinity Learning Partnership engaged with Litmus to help run a compliant tender process for their catering contract across all schools within the Trust. The incumbent contractor had shown poor communication and little motivation to improve service standards. Complaints about food quality and hygiene were not addressed proactively or efficiently, and there was a lack of transparency around financial performance - leaving the Trust feeling in the dark about sales and costs across its seven schools.

Additionally, very few formal or informal meetings took place, and it was felt that no meaningful relationship had been established between the contractor and the operational team.

Brief

Litmus was engaged to deliver a fully compliant tender process that would result in a strong, long-term partnership with the incoming catering contractor. This included managing the process from start to finish, providing expert guidance, and minimising the time and workload required from the Trust.

A key part of the brief was to ensure that any promises made by contractors during the tender and presentation stages were clearly documented and embedded into the contract as measurable KPIs. Litmus was also asked to secure a more robust financial offer, establish regular formal review meetings with the new contractor, and ensure full transparency around financial performance.

Finally, it was essential that the chosen partner aligned with the Trust's vision and values - particularly in relation to sustainability.

►► We were impressed with the professionalism and clarity of the procurement process led by Litmus. From the outset, they provided transparency at every stage - from the structure of the contract to the financial framework. The assessment of catering partners was thorough and well-evaluated, ensuring the selected provider aligned with our Trust's values and expectations. The financial transparency built into the contract has given us clear markers to assess performance, which has been particularly valuable in identifying how the catering partner is performing. The well-defined KPIs allow us to monitor progress and hold the provider accountable. Overall, Litmus delivered a structured and insightful procurement journey, along with the tools for robust ongoing contract management. ◀◀

Pardeep Dhami, Head of Finance

Approach

We began by ensuring the tender specification clearly reflected the Trust's key objectives, including financial transparency, added value opportunities, pupil and parental engagement, and a tailored approach to menus based on the unique demographics and needs of each school.

We explored ways to improve financial efficiency by maximising sales and arranged detailed tours of each site to help bidders understand the individual requirements of every school. The tender also required contractors to provide a detailed monthly breakdown of financial performance across the Trust.

To drive standards, we included a clause that put the contractor's management fee at risk, linked to agreed KPIs assessed on a termly basis.

Once the contract was awarded, we held comprehensive mobilisation meetings to ensure that all parties were aligned on objectives, reviewed and updated the proposed KPIs, and worked through timelines to support a smooth and successful start.

Outcomes

The project delivered several positive outcomes for the Trust including:

- Agreed KPIs are now reviewed and scored on a termly basis, helping to maintain high standards across all schools;
- Monthly financial breakdowns are shared and discussed, creating a joined-up approach to driving sales and managing costs;
- Regular meetings between the contractor and the Trust now take place to address any high-level concerns, with a focus on consistency across the seven schools- something the Trust values highly; and
- As part of the contract award, future budgets were guaranteed, providing the Trust with a greater level of financial security moving forward.



For more information about Litmus get in touch:

Email us at mailbox@litmuspartnership.co.uk

www.litmuspartnership.co.uk