



Charity begins at home

The NSPCC controls its spending with PROACTIS

When the NSPCC set out to overhaul its internal processes in 1999, the move was heralded as “the most important change to the way the society was managed since its birth”. The new initiative, which began with the implementation of PROACTIS from Spend Control software specialists Get Real Systems, was to have the cumulative effect of a multi-million pound donation to the NSPCC every year.

Last year the NSPCC raised over £90m for children’s causes. As the UK’s largest children’s charity, the NSPCC’s activities are wide ranging and include investigating allegations of child abuse, working with schools and youth organisations and promoting awareness of cruelty to children in all forms. The NSPCC recently launched the FULL STOP campaign; a high profile publicity drive aimed at developing and expanding the NSPCC’s work for the 21st century.

With approximately 1500 employees and many more volunteers carrying out the activities of the NSPCC, the charity operates across 180 teams and projects and a National Centre in London. The NSPCC is run like any other business with equal, if not more, pressure to scrutinise how it spends the £90m it receives in donations and legacies each year. Unlike other businesses, however the NSPCC works in the knowledge that every penny it makes in ‘profit’ is helping to improve, or even save the lives of children.

So when Belinda Turner joined the NSPCC in 1999 as the Society’s first dedicated Purchasing Manager, she immediately began a radical overhaul of the Society’s procurement strategy with the aims of saving the Society money and recouping the valuable hours its people waste on administration.



Belinda Turner: *“The NSPCC was like many other large organisations in that our old approach to purchasing was fragmented and did not take full advantage of our considerable buying power. The recent success of our FULL STOP campaign demonstrated our commitment to fund raising, but this initiative was about proving that we are equally committed to maintaining close control over what we spend.”*

For the first time, the Society would take a completely fresh approach to managing its £45m per year purchasing spend. A new procurement strategy, underpinned by software to control supplier contracts and empower staff to buy efficiently, would reduce spend by around 10% a year freeing up money which could then be channelled straight back into the Society's core business - helping children.

The strategy that was eventually decided upon was to have a central procurement department charged with negotiating national contracts and managing supplier relationships at a national level. This would allow the Society to utilise its considerable purchasing power and ensure it was getting best value from its suppliers. By placing this procurement framework on the new PROACTIS system, which also makes it easy for staff to buy against the contracts, this new approach also enabled dramatic efficiency gains from streamlined and simplified purchasing processes.

In addition, the PROACTIS system was integrated with the Society's legacy financial accounting system to automate key financial processes and provide an extra element of control. For instance, purchase orders are automatically coded up-front to improve analysis and reduce time when processing invoices, and commitment information is made available by the finance system in real-time, and checked prior to orders being approved. This stops people blowing budgets and ensures tight financial control.

PROACTIS is currently used by around 1000 staff across the NSPCC 200-plus locations in the UK. They are able to purchase goods and services, approve transactions, monitor progress and deal with invoice queries, all via the simple and secure Internet-browser based PROACTIS.

Belinda Turner concludes: *“PROACTIS has enabled us to take control of purchasing and truly understand what we are spending with our different suppliers. In turn, this has enabled us to focus more on getting better value and reducing our spend.”*