

## **Royal Borough reigns in spending, again and again and...**

Sitting in the heart of London, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is known for many things: a desirable postcode, well-heeled residents and some world-renowned buildings. But away from the glitz, it's also one of the most densely populated boroughs in the UK with areas of extreme wealth and poverty existing side by side, and the Royal Borough has to keep this geographically small district performing exceptionally come rain or shine.

Like most councils, Kensington and Chelsea relies heavily on a large temporary labour force to ensure a consistent service, constantly having to fill vacancies - from administration right through to social care. However, the issue of recruitment costs has become a political football as government squeezes councils to cut costs - according to trade union GMB, between 2006 and 2007, UK councils spent just shy of £2 billion on temporary and agency staff.

Kensington and Chelsea's track record in this area has been exceptional. For six years running, the council has achieved the highest possible rating in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment - a test which determines how well a council is run. A contributing factor to its success has been their ability to significantly reduce the cost of recruiting temporary labour. This reduction is due to the introduction of a managed service for the procurement of temporary staff, a system it has recently renewed.

Keeley Cooper, Recruitment Manager at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea explained why the council chose to take on a managed service solution: "Back in 2006 we realised that our agency spend needed reducing, and we had no central control or co-ordination of the supply of temporary workers, primarily in social care at the time," said Keeley. "It was tough for our line managers to find good people at the right cost, we

did have a preferred supplier list but often had to go outside of this list in order to get the right people, often at huge cost.”

As well as being costly, managers had their own relationships with recruitment agencies and there was a concern among staff that with a new system in place their way of working would be disrupted and close links and trusts would be affected.

After much research and evaluation, Kensington and Chelsea adopted a managed service for the procurement of temporary staff in order to create a more efficient and cost-effective method of managing its temporary workforce requirements.

As Keeley explains, the Royal Borough chose to partner with leading temporary procurement specialists Comensura. “At the beginning we used the Comensura system to manage our temporary worker requirements for social care staff. This was successful, so we have gradually expanded the programme since 2006.”

Comensura is the UK’s principal provider of procurement and supply chain management solutions. Comensura’s flagship IT system, C.net, has enabled Kensington and Chelsea to automate the business processes associated with procuring temporary staff, enabling the council to benefit from significant cost savings while guaranteeing quality of candidate.

The success of C.net is illustrated by the consistent faith shown in the system by the Royal Borough. Since April 2007, Comensura’s C.net platform has been extended to cover administrative and clerical recruitment, and in August 2008 it was rolled out across the whole council, from IT specialists right through to solicitors.

The Comensura system has brought considerable benefits to the Royal Borough. In its first year with Comensura, Kensington and Chelsea estimated it saved over £200,000. This was when Comensura was only being used for social care and clerical staff recruitment. The savings are expected to be significantly more in 2008/9 because it has brought its entire temporary staffing needs under the Comensura arrangement.

“As well as the cost savings, we can be much more confident that temporary workers have had the appropriate clearances prior to them working for us as Comensura conducts regular audits of the agencies that it works with,” said Keeley. “Prior to introducing Comensura there wasn’t any real way of ensuring temporary staff were appropriately vetted.”

The financial savings that are being seen, along with the quality of temporary workers and a strong auditing process have made for a successful implementation. With a close relationship between both parties any support, training, or advice is easily arranged.

#### **About Comensura**

Comensura, part of the Impellam Group, is the UK’s market leading provider of procurement and supply chain management solutions.

Comensura manages over £400m (\$700m) of spend per annum, and has over 100 live client implementations in both public and private sectors. Comensura processes over 15,000 transactions, worth in excess of £25m per month through the C.net platform, with over 9,000 unique users per month using the system. C.net handles in excess of 2 million transactions every year from over 39,000 ordering managers.

By automating the business processes associated with procurement, users are able to achieve significant and sustainable cost savings. Comensura currently provides services to a wide range of clients across the public and private sector including: Alcatel, City of London Corporation, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and ESPO. For more information go to: [www.comensura.co.uk](http://www.comensura.co.uk)