



## Case study

### North West NHS Suppliers Bureau at Groundwork EBS, Birkenhead

#### Approach

On behalf of the North West Regional Development Agency (NWRDA), Groundwork has developed and will deliver a programme to open up the NHS supply chain to locally based small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The significant NHS regional spend on goods and services will be the prime motivator to influence regeneration, improve health and reduce environmental impact. This is being done through upskilling the supplier base, identifying key areas of opportunity, engaging NHS trusts while raising awareness of sustainable procurement. The ultimate aim of the bureau is to increase the proportion of the estimated £2.2 billion NHS non-pay spend procured through North West suppliers.

#### Service/goods/outcome supplied

The provision of a range of support to SMEs (see action below), identifying opportunities within the North West for different business sectors and supporting the NHS in being a good corporate citizen.

#### Background

This project has been developed from work carried out in the Merseyside region (Health Action Zone Employment Innovation project) that finished in March 2003. This focussed on existing suppliers to Wirral NHS Trust and looked at reviewing and improving their health and safety arrangements. Many issues from both suppliers and trusts came out of the evaluation. These issues are being addressed through the current NHS Suppliers Bureau Project that is directly funded through NWRDA and matched with Objective 1 funding.



## Action

With SMEs:

- Training workshops (including tender procedures, structure of NHS, understanding decision making process, developing a strategy to sell into this market). Four events have been delivered (up to June 2005) to 133 delegates from 125 companies
- Development of database of local suppliers on-line
- Development of IT capabilities of suppliers to meet the requirements of NHS (e-commerce, e-trading, e-auctions)
- Auditing supplier businesses to ensure effective control of health, safety and environment impact; highlighting areas of weakness or risk. A report and action plan is produced to assist improvement.
- SME friendly health, safety and environmental manual/CD Rom has been developed to compliment the audit process
- Development of a North West NHS Passport scheme which will raise awareness and educate employees of NHS contractors on occupational health issues, risk and safety and the environmental impact of their work
- Setting up website ([www.intend.org.uk](http://www.intend.org.uk)) to effectively promote and communicate the work in progress with both supplier and NHS procurement departments. It will provide general NHS procurement information, NHS opportunities, capturing supplier interest, (contact details). This is currently in the process of being updated with a more detailed supplier registration / supplier portal with tender opportunities, frequently asked questions, e-bulletins.
- One-to-one support for suppliers

With NHS trusts:

- Involvement with procurement working group for Good Corporate Citizenship with representation from each of the three strategic health authorities
- Identifying existing suppliers within the region that would benefit from further support
- Identifying tender/quotation opportunities

On-going engagement with North West business support organisations (Business Links, Chambers of Commerce, Training support).

## Legality

At the moment the project is not challenging the legal processes involved in the tender process but is making the regional suppliers aware of this process. There are plenty of opportunities for trusts to initially obtain quotes and tenders for business under the European threshold (for areas such as building works, maintenance contracts, pest control, window cleaning, printing).

## Economic impact

The economic impact of the project will be formally evaluated mid-2006, with on-going communication with the suppliers engaged to identify issues and identify successes. Part of the evaluation will include an LM3 analysis to establish the impact of local procurement within the whole local economy.

Specific case studies have been developed with companies in the IT, food and office furniture sectors – who have increased the level of business within the NHS and effectively tendered for further business.

## Additional impacts

The project will help trusts to demonstrate their commitment to being a Good Corporate Citizen – through looking at a local procurement policy, communicating tender processes at a local level and supporting their own local suppliers to improve health, safety and environmental policies.

Through the project we are promoting other health issues such as the National Clean Air Award, encouraging companies to become smoke free organisations.

*Working towards a healthier Cheshire and Merseyside*

## **Next steps**

With the project being funded up to 31 March 2007 there will be on-going supplier workshops and support being offered. Suppliers going through the programme will receive further support and information on developments within the NHS – with the potential development of an e-portal.

There will be a formal evaluation of supplier success in terms of increased business within the NHS, impacts of reviewing health and safety practices (reduced accidents).

There is a wider project being proposed across the North West looking at the entire public sector.

Ends