

Sapphire Case Study: The National Autistic Society



"We have chosen to work with Sapphire as they offer a personalised service and they are able to support both our Proactis and SunSystems solutions with highly experienced consultants and a Support Desk that is second to none."

Ken Ewan



The National Autistic Society (NAS) is the UK's leading charity for people with autistic spectrum disorders and their families. Founded in 1962, it continues to spearhead national and international initiatives and provide a strong voice for all people with autism. The NAS provides a wide range of services to help people with autism and Asperger syndrome live their lives with as much independence as possible.

The NAS had been using a manual procurement system and the management team wanted the system to be automated in order to gain better control over the process and introduce standard procedures. They were also looking to automate accruals to get advance warning of committed expenditure – and more importantly, to flag extreme expenditure.

Ken Ewan, Finance Systems Manager, at the NAS set about identifying a suitable solution. Following a review of the solutions available on the market, the management team shortlisted just two solutions, one of which was Proactis.

The decision was made to implement Proactis Spend Control as, Ken explains, "Proactis is much more flexible and user-friendly than the other product that we looked at, and has a better look and feel to it. On a practical side, Proactis integrates with our document management system, which was a requirement, and is flexible enough to cope with all of NAS's processes – which the other solution we shortlisted could not."

Commenting on the features of Proactis that made it the right fit for NAS Ken says "Proactis has a very user-friendly interface. As part of the decision process we conducted end-user testing with a 3 day workshop. Both our users and the management team preferred Proactis to other solutions reviewed; there was a high level of buy-in from the people who would be using the solution as they all liked the look of the interface and the ability to customise their own portal."

Now that Proactis Spend Control has been implemented at the NAS and has been in use for some time, Ken tells us "Our Proactis solution more than meets our expectations. We are benefiting from tighter control as the accruals provide advance warning on overspend."

A total of 300 licensed users access Proactis across 30 NAS sites, with an average of 60 users in the system at any one time. Proactis is used to manage an indirect spend of over £8m, and is used to procure items ranging from groceries for houses and schools through to furniture, equipment and even agency staff. "We use it for most of our purchasing" says Ken. The solution has also been integrated with the NAS's SunSystems financial management solution and document management system, so that staff are able to view invoices.



On the day to day use of the solution Ken says "Proactis is very intuitive - so much so that formal training is rarely required for new users. Training is by means of a manual



Need More Information?



+44 (0)20 7648 2000



info@sapphiresystems.co.uk



www.sapphiresystems.co.uk

and from colleagues – thereby reducing training costs and ensuring productivity from an early stage.”

To other organisations assessing their procurement systems, and indeed any business solutions, Ken advises “Review your requirements, determine your specification and make sure you test thoroughly; due diligence is very important. I would also recommend the involvement of end-users, and indeed all stakeholders, in the decision process as to have them on board will help to facilitate a smooth transition to the new system.”

Ken concludes “I would have no hesitation in recommending Proactis Spend Control to others, largely due to the control that it affords management over spending. We have chosen to work with Sapphire as they offer a personalised service and they are able to support both our Proactis and SunSystems solutions with highly experienced consultants and a Support Desk that is second to none.”

