

Collaborative working and a commitment to get things done sustain a long-term partnership



Key points

Client:	The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust
Project:	Provision of Payroll and Pensions Services
Timeframe:	2008 to present day
Result:	In December 2015 payroll accuracy was 99.44%, meaning 6,000+ payments were made correctly to bank workers and substantive staff, with 581 employee queries resolved by the help desk.

The challenge

Migrating a service is an intense project. Both client and supplier teams need to be focused, ensuring there is a clear end goal in sight. However, the real challenge is in retaining that level of engagement and ensuring that things 'get done' whilst maintaining a 'business as usual' environment.

The Royal Marsden and NHS SBS began the migration of the payroll and pension services to NHS SBS in October 2008 over a six-week period. Eight years later the working partnership goes from strength to strength.

The solution

In this case, the success of the working relationship is down to:

- Investing time and energy to maintain a good day-to-day relationship. The teams and their leaders on both client and supplier side are actively tasked with managing the relationship.
- Prioritising collaborative working, which allows both parties to strive to find solutions together. Taking advantage of different perspectives and expertise to solve a problem is an obvious way to maximise the value of the relationship.
- Enhanced management information. Access to timely, accurate data is crucial. The suite of reports produced each month make it possible to identify trends and can be used to drive strategic decisions.
- A good level of engagement at all levels. Quarterly Service Reviews, attended by directors and senior representatives from HR and Finance and the NHS SBS Senior Manager and Client Partnership Executive, are an opportunity to discuss strategic issues and identify any areas of future opportunities. Also operational processes are discussed in the monthly call between operational leads.
- Well-defined areas of responsibility. A roles and responsibility

workshop was held to generate a document mapping each process in payroll and pensions and defining where that process fits within the two organisations. This was crucial at the beginning, and has been updated over the period of the relationship to keep up to date with organisational changes and to provide a reference point.

- A high level of accountability. The mapping of those distinct areas of responsibility and delegation ensures that flagged issues are scheduled for action and completed. The work gets done.
- Understanding The Royal Marsden's strategic objectives and how NHS SBS can provide support or solutions to meet these. The relationship between both organisations is key to the ongoing success and the development of services.

The result

- Close collaboration has enabled the working relationship to withstand key staff changes within both organisations without any impact on service delivery and client satisfaction.
- Changes to work structures such as increased working hours or staff promotions to a higher grade are a regular occurrence at The Royal Marsden and responsibility for inputting the changes rests with the Trust's HR team. To improve knowledge around these HR transactional changes NHS SBS ran a one-day workshop in October 2015 on the full payment cycle. This ensured that everyone understood the data they are responsible for entering and interpreting, and how each area of functionality sits within the integrated payroll system.

- Crucial to the partnership is a willingness to adopt a best practice approach to managing the payroll and pensions processes. The client and supplier teams have worked together to implement the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) best practice model and the NHS terms and conditions of service.
- The client and NHS SBS teams are also keen to share best practice and encourage other organisations to do so. The Royal Marsden team regularly attend NHS SBS operational focus groups. These quarterly forums facilitate discussion of legislative and statutory challenges and allow attendees to share experience of how to roll out changes or best practice.

**Marcus Thorman, Chief Financial Officer
at The Royal Marsden said:**

“Despite being a shared service and The Royal Marsden being a well-established client, NHS SBS payroll haven’t become complacent, they continue to treat us with a high level of importance.

There is still an impressive level of commitment and a focus on continuous improvement, and any issues are addressed and dealt with promptly.

Both parties recognise the importance of a high level of engagement and a commitment to maintaining a good working relationship.”

