

Communities of Learning

Visit of Erasmus procurement team to Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust – 20th June 2011



The Erasmus MC procurement team has, as part of their continuing professional education, made a visit to Rotherham Hospital to share experience on innovation procurement projects being undertaken as part of the LCB-HEALTHCARE Lead Market Initiative PPN and explore scope for ongoing cooperation.

It was also an opportunity for the team to view the newly installed 'Future Ward Lighting' proto-type.



The team met with the Director of Estates and Facilities, Head of Procurement and Energy Manager. They were joined by Department for Business Innovation and Skills, who have supported the project together with the Department of Health, from its inception. Also present were representatives of the consortium of suppliers that created an innovative solution in response to the Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust Forward Commitment procurement project.

An opportunity to exchange experience of innovation procurement

The main aim of this visit was to establish, on a first hand basis, how the Rotherham Hospital procurement team organized their 'Ultra Efficient Lighting for Future Wards' Forward Commitment Procurement (FCP) project, and their experience of implementing FCP in practice. It was also an opportunity to view the 'Future Wards Pod' demonstration at the hospital and hear directly from members of the pan-European consortia who developed the

preferred solution how the FCP process had enabled them to bring a new product to market.

“We also wanted to find out what lessons could be learned from their experiences to take home. It was invaluable to us to hear from the consortium that is now nominated as solution supplier for the ward refurbishment program. And it was interesting to hear the views of the Department for Business Innovation & Skills on the role of innovative procurement in the UK public sector” commented Joram Nauta, LCB-HEALTHCARE project Manager in the Netherlands.



In return the Erasmus MC procurement team has presented their specific procurement challenge and presented the work they have done up to this moment with their energy saving campaign. The Erasmus procurement team consisted of a senior procurement officer, one senior manager from the care logistics team and one member of the estates team.

The Erasmus MC procurement team is now in a stage where they have defined their unmet need as clearly as possible and have decided on the process of the procurement; a market consultation round to be followed by a competitive dialogue. This was the result of their internal consultation and an expert meeting with members of Pianoo (Dutch public procurement expertise centre) and experts on innovation procurement in May 2011.

Learning from experience

The Erasmus team came with a number of specific questions relating to the Rotherham Hospital teams FCP project.

An important lesson from the Rotherham FCP experiences was that you needed to take time to plan and organize the market consultation properly, and to get across your ‘unmet needs’ in outcome terms to a wide audience. It is often ‘outsiders’ than can help bring new perspectives to the market. Another question was how, from a practical perspective, to organize market consultations. Simply the choice of title can be important – it has to say what you want in order to elicit the correct responses to the needs of the procurer and trigger the supply chain to respond.

Another important question was about the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire. The use of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire is traditionally used to screen possible market parties and limit the number of parties who would start the competitive dialogue. The Rotherham team used the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire to continue to stress the importance of innovation, and to distinguish between parties that were likely to ‘talk the talk’ but could not understand how to ‘walk the walk’ of innovation. It also did not discriminate between

established parties with a proven track record and new entrants to the market, as it was felt that this was not the way to contract innovative solutions. Rather they would question the ability to demonstrate that parties would be able to deliver innovations and if parties were able to understand the specific requirements to be solved.

The supply chain perspective

From the side of the consortium they added that a firm programme of demands and timeline would have helped to maintain backing in their respective companies, and establish the necessary trust needed to invest in developing innovative solutions in advance to meeting deadlines of the project. The Rotherham team agreed that this was one area that they could have managed better; a more pro-active communication strategy would have helped during the market consultation to show that the hospital would really pursue the chosen procedure and not back out.

“These visits really work!”

“The visit has strengthened the belief of the Erasmus MC procurement team that the innovation procurement approach they have chosen whereby they involve the wider market will give a greater chance of the desired innovative outcome. It has given them assurance of the benefits of innovation procurement”. Said Joram Nauta, LCB-HEALTHCARE project Coordinator in the Netherlands.

The team at Erasmus MC are now preparing the market consultation and taking steps to communicate their unmet needs to the wider market.

Everyone agreed that the visit was too short – there was so much more that the teams could learn from each other and they agreed to establish regular exchange of information.

“Such peer-to-peer exchange of practical information and lessons learnt level is invaluable – especially seeing the results of innovation procurement on the ground and hearing the perspectives of suppliers”
Jeroen Veenendaal senior procurement officer (non-medical) of the Erasmus MC.

