

# Effective implementation strategy delivers results for Hertfordshire Constabulary



The advent of procurement cards at Hertfordshire Constabulary is the latest move in a three-year programme modernising the procurement function to deliver an effective strategic approach to the supply process supporting operational policing.

The first phase is complete, the project proven and role out commenced. As with many similar implementations the original aims of the project were traditional. To manage low value expenditure, bring control to unstructured spend, reduce the supply base tail and reap the benefits of more effective transaction management.

Working with this foundation, the force achieved the accolade of, *"the fastest public sector (GPC) implementation by a Barclaycard Business client"*. It took just 22 working days from the date Barclaycard Business was chosen to the first card being despatched. The headline always tells a different story to the reality - a great deal of teamwork delivered this high-speed implementation.

It was realised very early in the project that the key to effective implementation was to include all contributors to the purchase to pay process and that implementation did not start with the appointment of a GPC provider.

The key start point was project ownership, as the implementation was part of the strategic procurement improvement programme. Ownership of the implementation was with procurement, supported by finance and a cross-functional team comprising audit,

systems, users with external support and initial impetus provided by RedCap Associates, an independent card implementer.

Obtaining early buy-in from the Constabulary's Management Executive ensured that ambitious targets could be set. This included reducing operational budgets in anticipation of delivered process improvements.

The analysis and data mining of the financial system proved interesting - questions were asked for the first time. Several attempted reports finally produced the data: over 2,500 external suppliers, over 22,000 invoices, 89 per cent of suppliers with less than £10,000 annual expenditure and over 50 per cent of suppliers with less than £500 annual expenditure. A clear case for change!

Developing and streamlining the procurement process commenced to identify potential card users. This clarified thinking and developed the understanding of how far the project could extend across the Constabulary opening up the potential beyond the key procurement teams. At this stage in the process it was agreed that the maximum transaction limit would be £1,000. The concerns then started to emerge: fraud, trust, budget devolvement, audit-ability, only managers to hold cards, only transact with VAT capable suppliers, payment of the card account before user approval and so on. The key concern that could wreck the implementation was restricting card holders to management. This hurdle was cleared by discussions with managers and users. "What was their need?" Obviously managers did not want to be involved in day-to-day operation. Communication with other organisations using GPC also helped clarify thinking and cleared many of the internal concerns.

Once supply base data had been analysed, the project scope clarified, internal hurdles overcome, implementation targets reviewed and set, the GPC provider was selected. It was tempting to automatically select the Constabulary's Bank to provide the GPC but as part of the implementation strategy all potential providers were contacted with a service questionnaire. In essence, how would they work with us to provide fast track implementation and effective future support?

With the internal team on board and the majority of concerns removed, the swift implementation of GPC after appointment of Barclaycard Business as the card provider was a natural next step.



The fastest implementation then followed. Internal preparation took over 12 months, but this investment paid dividends and provided an exceptional foundation for a successful implementation. Role out across the force is well advanced after a four month proving phase involving three very different groups of users across the force.

Now role out is moving forward, the first year of implementation is not yet complete - some things have changed. The major change is in transaction limits. These are no longer set at £1,000; they are now set to meet business need and are therefore flexible. The highest transaction limit is currently £18,500 for two users (they need to get replacement engines!). Usage has moved beyond procurement to site engineers and specialist departments. Monthly transaction recording has also changed from spreadsheets to electronic statements, thus speeding up approval. The procurement card is now an essential tool for procurement of any item from VISA capable suppliers and it is not restricted to low value items.

Mrs P Davies, one of many satisfied users, summed up the overall advantage of using the card:

*"My card provided the quickest delivery. I ordered a mobile phone and accessories and had them delivered to my desk within one and a half hours. It used to take days!"*

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**IT TOOK JUST 22 WORKING DAYS FROM THE DATE BARCLAYCARD BUSINESS WAS CHOSEN TO THE FIRST CARD BEING DESPATCHED.**