

Prison service relaunches GPC as Phoenix Card

The Prison Service has recently awarded a new contract for the provision of Government Procurement Card services to Barclaycard Business, its existing provider

The Government Procurement Card is to be an integral part of a new IT driven business change programme that the Service has recently been embarked on. The Phoenix Programme aims to introduce new business practices through the implementation of integrated finance, procurement and HR Oracle ERP solutions. In recognition of this, the card is being re-branded as a Phoenix Card - and a bespoke card is being produced.

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As part of the Phoenix Programme the Service is implementing a new Procurement Strategy. This includes a new standard model for purchasing goods and services. The Phoenix Card will be one of only four acquisition methods available under this new model and will be targeted at non-standard, low value, low complexity spend. Other purchases will be either through local stores, e-catalogues or, for high value non-standard items, through an area based buying pool.

Ian Milner, Phoenix Card Project Manager, said: "It is envisaged that Phoenix Card will handle 90,000 of the 480,000 annual transactions dealt with by prison service staff by mid 2005". The Service hopes that by reducing the time and effort expended dealing with these disproportionately low value items, it will be able to reduce the cost of placing orders on the new purchasing system and enable buyers to focus more of their effort on adding value where it really matters.

In addition to these strategic reasons for using the new card, there are a number of other cost and

resource benefits that wider use will facilitate.

Cardholders will not need to issue purchase orders where the Phoenix Card is used. As a result, time will be saved at the purchase end of the process. Also, wider use will facilitate a reduction in the number of individual invoices. The Service, therefore, expects to benefit from a time saving at the payment end of the process.

The Service also expects that there will be other

cost benefits. In taking the Phoenix Card, suppliers will be assured of payment within four days of the transaction. As a result, many offer early payment discounts.

The Phoenix Card will also provide a more robust way of tracking low value expenditure. Ian Milner explained that: "Whereas previously many low value purchases were made using petty cash and therefore not auditable, Phoenix Card will provide a full audit trail of spend and therefore make it easier to detect and prevent any fraudulent activity".

The Service has actually had a purchasing card programme in operation since 1999. Currently, over 30,000 transactions are handled through the card. Those that have used a card to date have been positive about its introduction.

The Head of Management Services at HMP Kirklevington Grange said, "it is a simple and straightforward system that is easy to use. We would recommend encouraging others to make more use of the arrangements". The Head of Suppliers at HMP Littlehey also finds the card, "useful when paying



for goods or services from a company that we have not used before and not likely to use again. We can speedily use the card for things such as subscriptions, course fees or orders for bouquets from florists".

The new branded card (pictured) will carry the Phoenix logo and will be widely available. It will be rolled out to all sites from January 2005 along with a comprehensive guidance pack.

*For further information, please contact:
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Barclaycard Business is the leading UK member bank issuing the Government Procurement Cards and has been working closely with central government since 1997. Under the new agreement between the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and Visa Europe, Barclaycard Business is now able to work in partnership with the wider UK public sectors to help deliver additional cost savings through streamlining procurement.

The Government Procurement Card programme is approved by the National Audit Office and has already delivered over £70 million savings to the taxpayer and is expected to deliver further savings in excess of £200 million in the next five years.

For further information on how Barclaycard Business could help you deliver saving efficiencies please contact:

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