



Entry form

Submission Details

Organisation or individual to which this submission relates (if different from above)	The Schools' HR Advisory Team
Approximate size of organisation (number of employees) if applicable:	20,000 staff in organisation
Number of employees covered by the initiative if applicable:	25 staff in the team



Delivering outstanding commercial packages to the Education Sector – The Schools HR Advisory Service

Word count – 1,200 (from 'Introduction' onwards)

File size – 2.30mb

Introduction

NYCC is one of England's largest LAs, serving 600,000 residents. Predominantly rural, presenting additional challenges delivering effective services to remote communities, including some 375 schools.

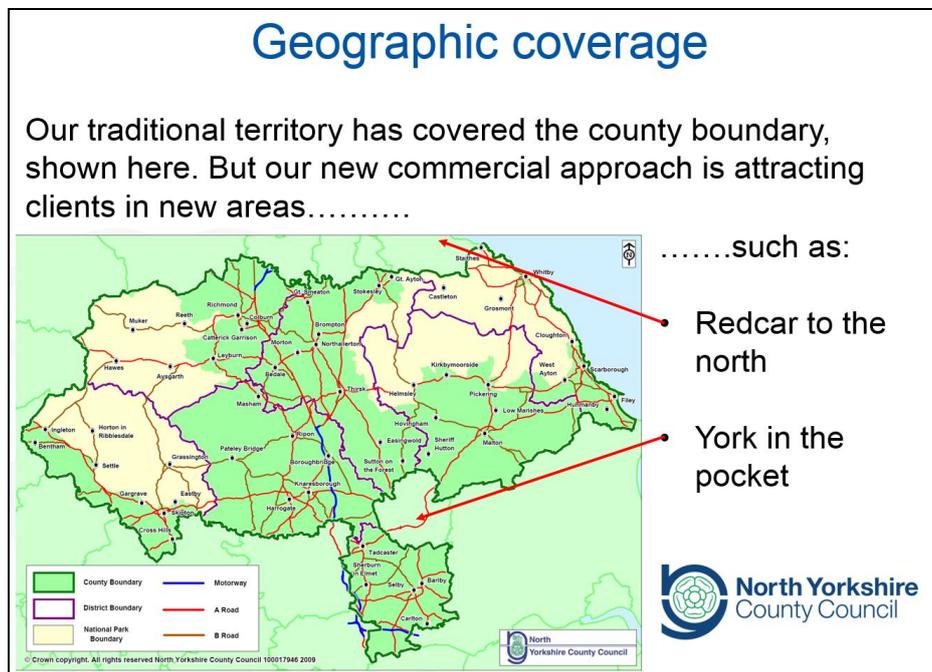
The HR advisory model used to deliver services to maintained schools wasn't going to be suitable for the competitive, commercial and efficiency driven environment of emerging Academies. So we've reinvented our offering to thrive in this new marketplace.

The Challenge

Proactive positioning

We were already recognised as professional, accessible and responsive. But we had a captive audience, delivering services in maintained settings. Whilst valued, this did not require a competitive approach.

The Academies Act shifted the educational landscape. Schools had more freedom choosing partners offering the best value for money. We re-positioned our advisory services as a traded offering, providing 'core' SLA support, with additional commissioned services, operating beyond North Yorkshire, exploiting fewer constraints on our ability to trade.



Determined competitors saw opportunities to target NYCC schools with aggressive marketing strategies. Comparing our retention rate (100%) to neighbouring authorities proves how exceptional our commercial strategy has been. Bordering LA's no longer offer HR provision to schools, replaced with private sector solutions. In preparing the team to meet these challenges, we've invested £200,000 in key appointments over two years, including three new appointments in February.

Maintained schools remain loyal, even whilst introducing a scale of charges for services that were previously taken for granted. But we have also become extraordinarily successful in securing new business from independent, multi-academy trusts, Early Years and standalone Academies, resulting in a thriving traded service that is still a proud part of NYCC. But our maintained schools are still key, so we adapt to provide the same high standards to all our clients. Result - they become our strongest advocates to potential new clients.

Direction of travel

This project aligns directly with organisational vision/strategic priorities, whilst embracing the government's position on academisation:

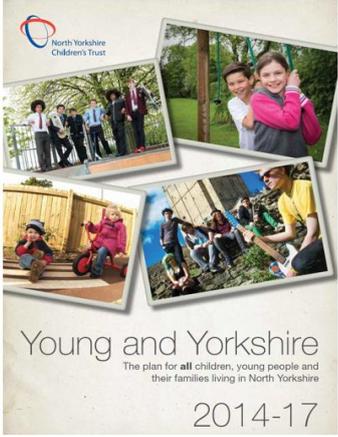
- **“Ensuring that education is our greatest liberator, with a greater proportion of pupils attending a good or outstanding school”**. A priority in NYCC's 'Young and Yorkshire' plan, improving outcomes for children. North Yorkshire has double the national rate of improvement for schools being good or outstanding (86% of primary, 80% of secondary pupils). Having the right talent, in the right structures, our team has played a significant part in this success.
- 2020 North Yorkshire - an ambitious change management programme which seeks **“to realign the council fundamentally in the face of a future of significantly reduced funding levels”**. Realising a more commercial mindset is required, flexible and agile to respond to changing markets, we were pioneering as the first NYCC service to work with

schools outside North Yorkshire. HR are setting the pace for 30 other LA traded services, demonstrating how a previously funded service can become a viable business. We are supporting partner services to replicate our commercial success.

Alignment with organisational and governmental direction



“ambitious programme to realign the council fundamentally in the face of a future of significantly reduced funding levels”



“a greater proportion of pupils attending a good or outstanding school”



Educational Excellence Everywhere

March 2016

“All schools must become academies by 2022”



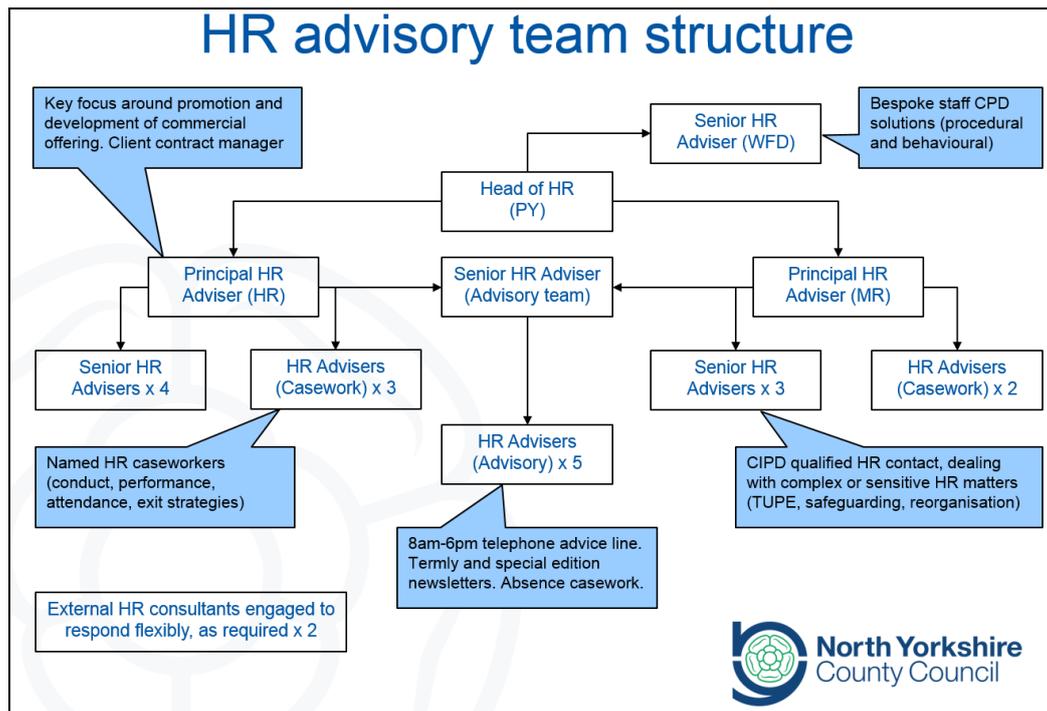
North Yorkshire County Council

The Solution

The School's HR Advisory Team

Consists of:

- 2 x Principal HR Advisers, including a new position as the driving force behind our successful commercial approach and broadening of our offering across the education sector.
- 8 x Senior HR Advisers, CIPD qualified, named contacts for in-depth and complex HR needs, and revenue generating commissioned work.
- 5 x HR Advisers (Casework), aligned to 'patches' to deliver full generalist support.
- 5 x HR Advisers (Advisory), a desk based hotline service, so that schools always have advice literally at their fingertips.



Dedicated roles provide appropriate levels of support, satisfying different levels of need. Schools report a strong sense of trust and confidence through developing established relationships.

Additional Advisers are engaged on a freelance basis to smooth the peaks, and ensure no client is frustrated by us being unable to respond to an extra request.

The service is involved in ground-breaking enterprises, trialling a modern promotional approach that exploits e-marketing and social media to engage with our customers.

Unique selling points

- 'Bespoke HR' Service – Responsive/proactive, independent, experienced HR professionals taking the lead on tailored/complex/time consuming HR issues.
- 'Intensive Intervention Packages' – Where concentrated support is necessary, in-school, using intelligent data sharing and training interventions to overcome urgent/serious HR matters.
- 'Live Chat' - A really easy and innovative way for customers to get in touch with our services and receive responses quickly.
- Ofsted preparation – Audit schools' Single Central Record, advise on Ofsted readiness, and identify areas of concern. Hugely popular with increasing take-up.
- Policies/procedures – HR policies, already consulted on with unions, may not be suited to all educational settings. We produce tailored academy versions with the same regular review periods.
- Access to partner services:
 - Health & Wellbeing for occupational health advisory services
 - Employee Support Services for payroll, and HR admin/systems
 - Training & Learning

- Workforce development analysing implications of strategic decisions
- Resourcing Solutions for recruitment, assessment and career transition matters
(These are also an opportunity for income generation for those services)

Challenges along the way

Challenge	Solution
Schools realised they had a choice, with no shortage of suitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated named contacts • Respond quickly, reliably and professionally • Access to CPD training events • Growing the reputation of our service • Bespoke packages for clients leading to outstanding retention
Budgets under intense pressure – services must be fully self-sufficient.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent pricing policy - it is evident what is in the SLA, and what is extra • Using income generation to justify investment in our enterprise
Need to modernise and respond to new ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in mobile technology allowing the field based team to work flexibly and efficiently • Team training in commercial awareness and the importance of client care
Respond to growing demand and a more astute client base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of consultant HR professionals, along with permanent additions, based on projected growth – funded by the service. • Improved intelligence to respond to existing client intentions and embrace new opportunities • Ad-hoc activity, (commissioned investigations), has been a substantial area of growth

Benefits to the organisation

Tangible evidence of the initiative:

- Retaining existing customers generates over £590,000 p.a.
- In the last year, secured over £200,000 of contracts from new clients – taking turnover above £820,000 p.a., and in-year surplus over £110,000 carried forward.
- Commissioned work has brought in over £50,000 p.a.
- Reinvesting surpluses back into the LA pot
- The team grows with the client base, providing career opportunity/development
- Continuously sharing our best practice approach to commercialism
- Establishing LAs credibility as a service provider, leading to other traded services securing SLA's with our satisfied clients

Compliments and commendations - a few snapshots

“tailored to meet specific needs of academies”

Harrogate High



“outstanding service”

Outwood Grange Academy



“exceptional, you’re fabulous”

Graham School



“excellent in regards to the conversion work”

Brotherton & Byram Primary Academy



“really understood our childcare environment”

Funcare Ltd



“integrity and compassion”

Sutton in Craven Primary



“always able to help whenever
I have needed support/advice”

Settrington Church of England Primary



North Yorkshire
County Council

An uncertain future of the migration of maintained schools to academies, we now face with confidence and optimism. We have demonstrated that the reinvention of our offering can compete as a viable enterprise, and that our professional services are valued by clients who have no shortage of competitors for the business.

Commercial Director quote:

“HR have been a leading and proactive service in the drive for a more commercial approach in the public sector. As a traded service they have led this change, setting the benchmark for other traded services to follow, responding to challenges of the private sector and not only held their own, but surpassed what is being offered by competitors.”

Finally.....

We are very proud of what we have achieved, which has been recognised at our internal ‘Innovation Awards’. External recognition would be fantastic. Thank you for considering our award entry.