



Brent Council  
**Case study**

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# Comensura provide a managed service that adapts to Brent Council's requirements, delivering savings, visibility, control, risk management and social value.

## The customer.

Brent is now the fifth largest of the London boroughs and the fourteenth most densely populated local authority in the country.

Brent Council's vision is to make Brent a great place to live and work, where people feel that they have real opportunities to change their lives for the better, where they receive excellent services when they need them. Services within the Council are divided into five departments: Children and Young People, Community and Wellbeing, Resources, Regeneration and Environment, Performance, and Policy and Partnership.

The Council's workforce is absolutely key to delivering its vision, and temporary workers represent an important part of the Council's workforce. The use of temporary workers enables staffing levels to be quickly flexed in line with peaks and troughs of overall workloads. Temps are sometimes used to fill vacant posts before and during restructures to manage the risk of redundancies. They are also used where permanent posts are hard to fill.

## The challenge.

The Council has utilised the services of managed service providers since 2005 to support the efficient management of temporary worker supply. Comensura were originally appointed as a managed service provider in 2009 to replace the incumbent provider. Comensura and the first generation provider both operated on a 'vendor neutral' basis, whereby all supplying suppliers managed were treated on fair, equal and transparent terms.

In 2013, the Council took the decision to change its managed service dynamic, and opt for a master vendor led service. In this arrangement, a single supplier, affiliated to the managed service provider, was given preferential supply terms, and any opportunities that could not be filled by the supplier were passed down (after a time delay) to other suppliers.

This service delivered mixed results, and as such the council chose to go back market to tender its requirements. The Council sought a flexible delivery model that could be adapted to the different needs and challenges that its service managers face, and a service provider that could work with proactively as a resourcing partner to fulfil all its temporary labour needs.

**309**

hiring  
managers

**30**

locations

**14** job

categories

**4<sup>th</sup>**

generation  
managed  
service

# The solution.

Following a competitive tendering process via the YPO framework, the Council appointed Comensura, based on our ability to offer an adaptive model that fits around the Council's needs, rather than a model that required the Council to adapt its resourcing of supplier workers to a pre-determined and prescribed model. In some respects the award was unprecedented – a London Borough had never re-awarded to a managed service provider for temporary staff having moved away from them – but to put some perspective on matters, the Council have chosen our 'Adaptive' model rather than the 'Classic' vendor neutral model that was in place before.

Comensura provide the council with an adaptive managed service, shaped around the councils' requirements, and available 24/7. We manage a supply chain that delivers c400 weekly workers across 14 different staffing categories, including IT, Engineering and Surveying, Qualified Social Care and Interim.

## A Responsive Supply Chain

The council wanted to work with a MSP that could meet demand for a broad range of very different skills, including those in short supply and those that could not readily be met by a single supplier. One of the council's frustrations with its master vendor service was that the MSP was able to fill standard roles, but struggled with specialist positions. In recognition of this we maintained the outgoing MSP's recruitment arm to supply admin workers as a single supplier, but then introduced a range of specialist suppliers to meet specialist role requirements. All suppliers have been signed to contractual terms and must confirm that their candidates and workers meet compliance requirements (including DBS), providing supporting information as required.

Comensura also engage specialist suppliers as and where required to support non-standard, often one-off roles, which would otherwise be at risk of being engaged off-contract. This flexibility means that the council is able to secure workers on contracted terms and favourable rates for specialist placements such as Occupational Health Advisors, Senior Enforcement Officers (Trading Standards) and Health and Safety Advisors.

Our Business Partner also provides support for Council events (which generate revenue for the Council), liaising closely with specialist catering suppliers to ensure that the right staffing levels are in place to meet service delivery levels.

## Support for Hiring Managers

Whilst some hiring managers need little active support, others within the Council require support with longlisting or shortlisting candidate CV's, for example where cover is required for senior management positions or professional skills. To support this, our Business Partner works on-site at the Council and provides support to hiring managers as and where required, ensuring that hiring managers receive suitably qualified and experienced workers.

All orders are placed through our unique, proprietary technology c.net, which provides the added benefits of electronic time-sheeting and consolidated invoicing.

Our on-site Business Partner also provides hiring managers and Brent Council's HR team with two sets of monthly reporting, covering various aspects of temporary staff usage.

The reports are developed specifically to meet the Council's priorities and to support effective spend control and workforce planning. A separate report is created for the Council's Strategic and Operational Directors, developed specifically to provide information required in line with the Brent 2020 strategic plan.

## Value for Money

As with all local authorities, Brent Council face ongoing financial pressure to deliver savings, and to ensure that their expenditure represents value for money. As you would expect for a customer looking for its fourth generation managed service, supplier margins were very competitive, particularly for high volume, standard roles. Based on our experience of working with specialist suppliers and the volume business (and equality of opportunity) that we offer them across our customer basis however, we have secured further margin savings for the council through our re-procurement of suppliers.

Additionally, we have been able to bring a substantial amount of off-contract expenditure on-contract, further contributing to overall savings delivered. The supply of interims was one of the largest off-contract areas which is now transacting on-contract – this has been achieved through us taking a flexible and reasonable approach to supplier engagement, which works well for all parties.



## Social Value

Within this flexible model, the Council sought a partner that could work with local communities to help provide a more diverse temporary workforce and to help reach those who are long term unemployed. To support this, our Business Partner has integrated the council's employability brokerage 'Brent Works' into the supply chain. This is an approach that we have adopted with other councils, and has demonstrably delivered results – over 200 placements with one customer.

We have procured suppliers at a local branch level to ensure that local business and local candidates prosper in our model. This provides the opportunity for our Business Partner to target further social value through working in partnership with suppliers who have an active interest in supporting their local council.

Further planned initiatives (at the time of writing) include providing support for Care Leavers and apprenticeships.

## Strategic Partnership

The council sought a partner who would work with the Council to assist with demand forecasting and workforce planning, providing a proactive approach to demand management based upon their experience and expertise in this field. Using our experience of delivering total cost reduction of over 50% of spend with a number of customers (including other London Boroughs) we have introduced a number of demand controls and our Business Partner provides support for workforce planning.

Our Business Partner provides detailed management information for the Council's HR team, Strategic Directors and Operational Directors to help the council plan and control its usage of contingent workers. Given the flexibility of our technology c.net we have also added features and generated additional management information fields as requested by the Council. We manage and pay all Council referred workers.



**4%**  
**savings**  
**on total**  
**expenditure**

## The benefits.

- 4% additional margin savings from the re-procurement of rates.
- £5 million of off-contract spend bought on contract, under control, using consistent terms and conditions and now visible to the Council centrally.
- Further savings delivered through tenure reductions.
- Integration of Brent Works as a supplier.
- Robust control of demand and workforce planning.
- Payroll management of Council referred workers.

**A smarter  
way to work.**

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