
Police Authority Achieves Policy Compliance & Essential Financial Controls with PROACTIS

PROACTIS automates the purchase-to-pay process, reducing processing costs and cycle times

Profile

The Police Authority is one of the largest in England and Wales, employing approximately 10,000 staff. It is split into eight divisions and 27 internal departments across the region, with each division and department managing its own budget. The Authority spends around £100m per annum on a diverse range of indirect goods and services – from interpreters, to stationery, to uniforms, and multi-million pound contracts.

Challenge

Prior to PROACTIS, the Authority had no computerised process for requisitioning. There were numerous ways to requisition goods and services, all of which were inefficient and gave little auditability. There were 15 different ways to raise a requisition, from passing a post-it note to tapping someone on the shoulder, to making a phone call or sending an email. These requisitions were then manually placed into the Authority's Infor SunSystems finance system, however there was no automatic routing and the authorisation process involved paper orders so was manually intensive. This method was obviously time consuming and gave the Authority little visibility to obtain a detailed breakdown of what they were spending money on.

The Authority also had no computerised goods and services receipt process, which meant that all receipting was done manually and delivery documents were authorised using pen and paper. This could lead to delays and extra admin effort in the purchase-to-pay cycle.

With over 35 administration departments raising approximately 80,000 orders a year, the Authority recognised a big opportunity to streamline their purchase-to-pay processes and reduce the time and cost involved in ordering goods and services. The existing manual system meant it was difficult to provide an audit trail and report on specific item categories. For an organisation funded by public money, these capabilities have become essential.

Streamlining the Purchase-to-Pay Process

The Police Authority looked at a number of eProcurement vendors that offered purchase-to-pay solutions and selected PROACTIS.

After a trial roll-out in one of their divisions, PROACTIS was extended across all eight divisions and 27 departments, with 80% of the Authority using the system within 12 months. The Authority worked with PROACTIS to configure the system to its needs, for example with customised order templates as different departments need to order and authorise in different ways. They were impressed how quickly the majority of the organisation was up-and-running on the system and other more complex departments soon followed.

The PROACTIS purchase-to-pay system, which has a web-based interface, was implemented so that all 10,000 staff can log in to raise requisitions for internal goods, such as uniforms. For external purchases, the ordering process has been centralised to reduce administration costs and increase efficiencies. Business Support Units receive order requests from staff and raise the requisition from an electronic catalogue within PROACTIS. The requisition is automatically routed through workflow to the relevant administration team who create the order. The order is then electronically directed to the relevant people for authorisation.

The system has been configured to allow staff to only see what they need when they raise a requisition to make the process quicker and simpler. For example, with an Officer needing to order a new item of uniform, the process has to be quick and simple so they can focus their time on front-line duties. They don't need to see things like account and supplier codes so these are hidden, meaning an Officer can raise a requisition in just six clicks within the software.

In addition to the purchase-to-pay system, the Authority also uses the PROACTIS Stores module to manage uniform orders. This was previously done using a standalone software product that had no links to the financial ledger or to the officers' scale of issue. This made it difficult to manage spend as they did not know if an Officer had ordered over their allowance. With PROACTIS, all orders are catalogued and the system prevents a user from placing an order if they have reached their entitlement, ensuring there is no unnecessary spending.

Once goods are delivered, they are receipted in PROACTIS, so when Finance processes the invoice (which will quote the purchase order number), it is automatically matched to the order in PROACTIS and they can clearly see if it can be paid – without needing to contact the member of staff who placed the order. If there are any queries that need to be raised, these are done in the system which will send an alert to the relevant member of staff that there is an issue to troubleshoot. This significantly reduces administrative effort in Accounts Payable.

As well as integrating PROACTIS to their Infor SunSystems finance system, the Authority has also interfaced to other back-office systems, such as their HR system. This allows PROACTIS to recognise the division and role of a user so they see the order templates relevant to them and the requisition is routed through the appropriate workflow. The real-time link between the two systems immediately updates users in PROACTIS as they join and leave the organisation, activating and deactivating them respectively.

Feedback

The Authority were really impressed with how quickly PROACTIS implemented the system and got everyone using it. Because it's easy to use, staff raising requisitions required no training at all, meaning they only had to train the administration staff that raise orders and the invoicing employees.

With PROACTIS in place, the Authority has significantly reduced the time and resource involved in the purchase-to-pay process, from raising a requisition, through to authorisation and payment. In addition to these efficiency gains, streamlining their processes has also reduced the amount of maverick spend and given the Authority greater visibility of what they're spending money on and with whom. This means they have better management information and are able to provide a full audit trail, unlike before.

PROACTIS met the Authority's requirements and worked flawlessly from the initial implementation without the Authority having to throw any additional support or software at it and they found the system to be extremely intuitive and user friendly.

The Authority is also using PROACTIS to centralise its invoice processing at its headquarters, which has been a huge benefit. With invoices predominantly arriving at one location, rather than at numerous sites across the county, the processing is much quicker and fewer invoices are delayed or lost in transit. Invoices are scanned into the Authority's document management system, where they are automatically matched to the order in PROACTIS.

The Procurement department is also benefitting from PROACTIS by using it to aid supplier management. PROACTIS enables them to analyse spend across different categories and suppliers so they can consolidate spend with fewer suppliers and negotiate better prices for contracted items.

Another area the Authority is looking to tackle is employee expenses, which is currently processed manually. By using PROACTIS to process staff expenses such as travel costs in the same way as other purchases, the Authority can ensure proper controls and remove the long paper chase.