



Shared Services Case Studies

Case Study 04: Pan London Coordinated School Admissions

Scale:	39 Local Authorities supporting the secondary school admissions process for approximately 68,000 applicants across London. The budget for this project was in the region of £1.5million.
Sector:	Public sector
Timescales:	Project start: March 2003. Project completion: June 2006. Now provided as a sustainable service via London Grid for Learning.
Parties involved:	ODPM (now Department for Communities and Local Government), DfES, Wandsworth Council (lead Borough), 39 Local Authorities (London Boroughs and neighbours), Atkins Management Consultants, London Grid for Learning, Arête Software (core software provider) and school admissions system suppliers (Tribal Technology, Capita and Arête Software)
Verdict:	Delivered planned benefits to time and budget. Met core objectives of Transformational Government Agenda.

Overall Project Objectives

To provide coordinated secondary school admissions system for 33 London Boroughs and 6 neighbouring authorities in support of the DfES Code of Practice for School Admissions. The objective of the project was to ensure each applicant received the single best offer of a secondary school place from preferences made on their application form.

Project Description

Around 65,000 pupils in London transfer to secondary school each year, many crossing borough boundaries to do so. Many parents apply to several schools and up until 2005, many received offers of places at more than one school whilst other parents received no offers. From 2004/5, to make the process fairer and simpler, all 33 London boroughs, together with 6 neighbouring councils, coordinated admissions. This project was led by Wandsworth Council and project managed by Atkins Management Consultants. The project provided a two stage technical solution – a Local Admissions System for each LEA to process and rank incoming applications and ensure no applicant is offered more than one place, and a Pan London Register which shares information with other LEAs so that applications received in one borough that relate to a school in another are forwarded to that LEA. The systems process and exchange data until all applicants have been allocated to the highest possible preference school.

Challenges, Issues and Problems

- High number of stakeholders, 33 London boroughs, 6 neighbouring authorities.
- Supplier engagement – 3 different suppliers providing systems to the authorities.
- Lack of maturity of the data exchange standards – this was the first time they had been used in a live capacity so there were many interpretation issues.
- High profile of London School Admissions attracted considerable press interest – often negative.

Project Benefits

Delivered major improvements to the secondary schools admissions process across the capital. For users (parents and carers) it provided cohesive and coordinated schools admissions;- following the coordinated admissions round for 05/06, 64% fewer pupils were without an offer of a school place than before the project and 93% of applicants were offered a place in a school of their preference. For LEAs, a cumbersome manual process had been automated, resulting in reduced data entry, increased speed of applications, reduced errors, improved efficiency and savings in development costs (compared to each LEA using an individual system).

Reasons for Success

The project was built on strong collaboration and engagement at admissions manager level. The solution was driven by the business requirements (not IT) and a common admission scheme was agreed very early on in the project. Strong leadership was provided by the Pan London Executive Board, chaired by the Chief Education Officer from Sutton. This was underpinned by formal programme and project management headed by an experienced project manager from Atkins. Excellent collaboration between the lead borough,

EURIM Case Study continued – Pan-London Coordinated School Admissions

Wandsworth Council, the other 38 Local Authority participants and the private sector partners.

Conclusion - did the project meet the core objectives of the Transformational Government agenda?

The project met the core objectives of the Transformational Government Agenda by delivering a truly citizen-centric service – fitting the available places around pupil preferences – and by improving efficiency through the provision of a shared service.