

1. **Human Resources – HLT.** *J Larkin & C Woodward* presented slides covering:

**HR policies to schools, including:**

- Expanding the social networking policy to assist schools manage expectations of staff
- Cyber bullying policy, includes both pupils and staff; and clarifying
- Dismissal process. All community schools must note that the Governing body have no legal right to dismiss staff. The Local Authority is the employer. The LA should attend the dismissal hearings, the Governing Body recommends, and the LA confirm/ratify to complete the process.

**Coming Soon:**

- Payroll providers are checking that maternity leave for Term time only staff has been correctly paid
- DBS on line, expected live at Christmas, but still have issues with security. London met still have huge backlog
- Code of Conduct to be updated to include expectations to social media, and use of mobile phones in the work place

**Pre Employment checks – Support staff**

- Reference checking a bit weak, noted that often hard to get, especially from corporate employers. Can always ask for another character reference
- Must check for gaps in employment history, and if not clear ask.
- Send a form to referees to assist timely completion, and prompt for the relevant information.
- If in any doubt – don't appoint
- Always start the probation process, interviews after the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> months. If have concerns, bring meetings forward

**Pre employment checks – Agency staff**

- Ask for cv's & references if working for longer than the odd day, (threshold: 1 week?). Agency should check references, but they may not do it as well as school would like. So ask for copies
- If appointing agency staff into permanent role, always go through a process :
  - Obtain references, even if by an internal colleague
  - Have an interview, and take notes
  - Ask for the application form to be completed.
  - Check references (including medical), and complete a DBS check
  - Not necessary to advertise externally

2. **Year end Consistent Financial Reporting – Schools to report direct to DFE**

Informed schools that they will be responsible for uploading the year end to the DFE this year. Schools will be supported through the process with a reminder sent in March, when the new DFE guidance notes are published. Schools should:

- Make sure the Secure Access “approver” in the school gives business manager access to COLLECT
- Check the income reported against CFR codes, so that at year end they will be correct. (check against the finance web page)

3. **Pensions - LBH** *Gary Nash*

Contractual & auto-enrolment, payroll providers, TUPE and Pension Administration Strategy (PSA)

- Contractual employment updates each July. If staff have opted out, need to renew decision each year

- All schools must send starter form to pensions, to allow staff to opt in, if not already in pensions scheme
- Opt out forms can't be provided by school management (seen as enticement). "Friends" in the school can pass them around, on request.

### **Payroll providers**

- If schools switch payroll provider, schools should make sure the new provider will supply necessary employment forms to pensions at year end & throughout the employment period of the employee
- The contract should make this clear and at what cost

### **TUPE Outsourcing catering or cleaning?**

- Schools must inform Payroll & Pensions when starting the process. Some new contractors will not accept responsibility for Local Govt. Pension Scheme, and may pull out when they realise the true cost
- All Pension costs for scheme members to increase by 3.4% in April (cost to the employer)
- Question: Transfer on terms & conditions, if altered straight after transfer or, if changed T&C on individual basis, may have grounds for complaint. Contact union or Citizens Advice
- Never advise a new employee from another LA or pension scheme on merging the schemes etc. Individual protections, circumstances & service will vary, you may not be giving the best advice
- If individual has past pensions they can't track, refer them to the pensions team

### **Pension Administration Strategy (PSA)**

- A change in the levy for late information, will be transferred to schools if charged by the PSA
- Don't ignore the forms received, if you don't understand them – contact the pensions team
- Schools can up-load onto 'sharefile', if you have problems, contact team

## **4. Best Practice Procurement for Schools - HLT**

- Seeking quotations, refer to the schools agreed financial policy
- EU procurement rules must be complied with, (due to change in January. Note that a contract value is the total contract value, not the annual charge. If in doubt, contact procurement
- Rolling contracts are in breach of EU regulations. If schools have a rolling contract they are not compliant, and should seek to re-tender. (check you catering & cleaning contracts)
- Suppliers ringing & claiming to be council "preferred/approved providers" can be misleading. Check with procurement.
- Outlined benefits of group tendering arrangements.

Q1. Asked if schools were interested in a group tendered catering contract?

Q2. If you have a rolling contract, and need to re-tender – Are you interested in joining the current cleaning contract?

- Schools reminded of the current statutory maintenance contract, and the different levels of cover it provides. Contact procurement if interested

## 5. Havering Catering Presentation

- Havering outline offer, and different levels of service available. Currently operating on various levels in about 6 other LAs.
- One option is to manage an in-house catering provider, support & train staff, benchmarking productivity, ensure compliance, and assist in procurement of food and menus.

## 6. Audit – LBH Best practice for procurement cards and petty cash. Corporate whistle blowing

### Recent topics:

- Procurement cards.
  - Must have documented procedures, named card holder is responsible for all spend on that card, best practice not to share.
  - Should be part of scheme of delegation
  - Reconciliation by non-card holder.
- Gifts & Hospitality
  - Meals out; parties; gifts – **NO**
  - Team building hotel stays etc – **IFFY**
  - Trips abroad etc. – have a business case to support, and agreed by Governing Body before commitments entered into.

Think about how local press would view if became known!
- Taxis – some schools can be excessive. It should be justifiable, and not ‘the norm’
  - Schools Finance to publish guidance on the web page in new-year.
- Petty Cash – should always reconcile to a voucher.
- Counter signing – Need to know oversight is maintained in the school

## 7. Whistleblowing

- All workers, including temporary, agency staff or contractors, can use the whistleblowing framework.
- Should be for the public good, not personal grievances
- Can include damage to the environment
- Never go to the press or elected members, refer to M Sheffield, if feel unsure of going to the head teacher
- Whistleblowing overrides a leavers ‘gagging’ order

## 8. Any Other Business

**8.1. Cash flow** – check before year end, and contact schools finance if have a concern.

**8.2. Payroll** – reverting to previous system (LBH providers only)

**8.3. VAT receipts.**

- Contact schools finance team if anything outstanding in 15-16 VAT reimbursement, as we feel it is up-to date.
- Previous year’s VAT to be resolved with a letter sent ASAP