

Transforming the Education Procurement Market: A Unique Not-for-Profit Schools-Led PSBO Launched

Public procurement in UK education is complex. Ensuring the needs of pupils, teachers and support staff are catered for, while continually improving and maintaining facilities and compliance, is a difficult balancing act, especially when providers are not education specific.

For schools, finding time can be the greatest challenge when trying to obtain the best deals. This can be due to the complexities of researching new suppliers thoroughly, and remaining compliant throughout the process.

Because of this, schools are finding they have to let contracts roll over. This can leak value for them. Without pre-negotiated deals and managed supplier contracts, it is highly likely they are paying over the odds for goods and services.

Leverage is all important in negotiating good deals, and in the absence of a co-ordinated approach to procurement and harnessing their buying power, there is no incentive for suppliers to offer discounts and better deals.

Furthermore, with prices going up, suppliers will be looking to pass those costs onto the buyer. Without a contract that controls cost fluctuations, there is no leverage to be able to avoid price increases.

Introducing Education Buying Group PSBO

Jenny Williamson, CEO of Churchmarketplace & Education Buying Group Director, and Rob Kissick, founder of 2buy2 with which Churchmarketplace has collaborated since 2010, wanted to take this support for schools a step further. In-depth research revealed that the education sector, specifically, was poorly served when it came to buying solutions.



Building on the work achieved with Churchmarketplace and 2buy2, instead of duplicating frameworks, the two organisations decided to collaborate and create a buying group for the education sector, by the education sector. In February 2022, a new Public Service Buying Organisation (PSBO) called Education Buying Group Ltd was created. Education Buying Group Ltd has been formed as a joint venture between 2Buy2, Churchmarketplace and three Multi Academy Trusts (MATs): St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust, The Painsley Catholic Academy and The Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust.

A PSBO is a governing body that focuses wholly on delivering top quality procurement as well as the best supply chain services. Until the formation of Education Buying Group, there wasn't a PSBO that was run by MATs to support themselves and other educational establishments. PSBOs are often generic, not



specialising in covering the specific needs of schools, that's what the Education Buying Group PSBO has changed. Schools are at the heart of the solution, and this PSBO has a keen focus on helping deliver social value and ethical procurement, specifically.

Jenny says: "Education Buying Group will streamline the procurement process for the education sector, focusing on generating savings, encouraging the inclusion of social value into bids by suppliers and creating opportunities to deliver efficiency and expertise for educational establishments without a procurement team. There isn't another PSBO that is run by MATs. The support offered will be unique in its effectiveness in running and managing procurement because of its depth of understanding in the sector."

Rob adds: "Our passion to improve buying for schools is what we wanted to highlight with the creation of Education Buying Group Ltd. Being able to give back to the schools and MATs we look after via grants only fuels the passion further. We are excited to see how much EBG can change the lives of the pupils in schools we help."

It is free for any school or MAT to sign up and use the Churchmarketplace Education Buying portal. The education sector can make use of compliant procurement solutions and the dynamic contracts register tool. EBG will save the education sector time and money, enabling resources to go back into the classroom. An optional consultancy service is offered to schools, which is delivered by the team at 2buy2.

Education Buying Group through the Churchmarketplace Education Buying portal (<https://www.educationbuying.com/cmp>) currently offers eight frameworks and Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPSs) that cover key spend areas for schools, with another four coming soon. Of the four coming soon, Educational Supplies arrives in June, with MFDs following soon after.

Frameworks and DPSs currently live and available include:

- Catering
- Cleaning
- Telecoms (Landline)
- HR & Payroll
- Accountancy & Financial Services
- Legal
- External Audit
- Internet Connectivity



Across these categories, there will be a spend of approximately £3 billion. After expanding on these categories, the potential market increases to around £10 billion a year. The Education Buying Group aims to achieve £100 million in savings for education by 2025.

Simon Redfern, Finance Director at St Ralph Sherwin comments: "Lowering the cost of procurement is absolutely vital to ensuring that a greater level of resources can be invested in our pupils' educations. We are delighted to be able to share this benefit with our friends and colleagues in other educational establishments across the country."

The Importance of Social Value

Recently, social value has become a much more sought-after contractual requirement. The expert procurement team working within Education Buying Group are well versed and dedicated to making sure schools, MATs, colleges and universities are benefitting the wider community and the people that work within them in the long run.

Examples of creativity and expertise in creating contracts allows for the achievement of social value outcomes in numerous ways, such as sourcing locally farmed goods for school dinners, to making sure any newly hired cleaning staff are paid the National Living Wage.

Specialising in covering the specific needs of a school, that's what the Education Buying Group PSBO has changed.



Claire Easun, an Education Buying Group Director says: “It was fundamentally important for us to create a PSBO that is not-for-profit, with surplus funds getting passed back into education establishments as a grant. Profit margins are not the goal, savings are. I’m so excited for EBG Ltd. I’ve always had an ambition to work for a not-for-profit and I think it has the power to do so much good.”

EBG director and COO of Painsley Catholic Academy Jo Bradbury adds: “We can’t wait to see the impact of Education Buying Group Ltd on the educational sector. By focusing on social value outcomes and savings over profit we aim to create long-lasting change to any school or MAT we work with. With EBG being the first PSBO that’s for schools, by schools, we look forward to our dynamic frameworks saving more than ever before.”



Example of how MATs & schools can save

The Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust (DoWAT) recently found itself in need of some internal auditing to help manage any potential financial risks associated with a growing educational establishment.

It was key for them that a company with enough experience working with MATs would conduct the tender process to find an audit partner.

DoWAT’s CFO, Micon Metcalfe, stated that: “Our timescales were tight. Education Buying stepped in to work at the required pace all while utilising Education Buying Group’s (PSBO) dynamic frameworks available to them to invite service providers to bid.”

Micon went on to say after the work was finished: “I valued the professional guidance relating to fair procurement processes, and using the service meant that our procurement timeline did not slip.”

Jennifer Williamson, CEO of Churchmarketplace and Director at EBG says: “I find it extremely rewarding after many years of collaboration between CMP and 2buy2 to be part of a unique not-for-profit organisation dedicated to helping schools find procurement solutions in Education Buying Group Ltd. It’s been hard work, but I look forward to seeing the impact EBG has in the coming months and years ahead as we work with other key organisations in the sector, such as the Department for Education, to drive awareness of the offering and support available through EBG.”

Education Buying is thrilled to be helping the education sector throughout the UK save more than ever before. The establishment of Education Buying Group (PSBO) is the next evolutionary step in helping schools save time and money while impacting their communities through social value.

Call to action

The frameworks and DPS agreements put in place by the Education Buying Group PSBO are available to Catholic schools and MATs now via the Churchmarketplace Education Buying website. To access these agreements, plus the additional benefits provided by the procurement-as-a service platform, please register for free at www.educationbuying.com/cmp.

Additional benefits and resources available to schools and MATs include pre-vetted suppliers, PCR15 compliant agreements, readymade tender documents, buying guides and a dynamic contracts register.

For schools and MATs requiring extra support, consultancy and contract management options are available for a negotiated fee.

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