Background
The decision to replace the old Highwood Hospital in Brentwood, Essex, with a purpose-built hospital to meet the latest 21st Century standards, presented South West Essex PCT with a huge opportunity to improve patient care – and an equally big procurement task.

The challenge was to find health care providers who could deliver the full range of 17 different services that the new hospital would offer to the very highest standards.

Role of the Collaborative Procurement Hub
With no experience of procurement on this scale, the PCT turned to the East of England NHS Collaborative Procurement Hub for help in securing the services they required for the new Brentwood Community Hospital, which was due to open in August 2008.

The tendering process started in October 2007 and the Hub, working in close partnership with the PCT, managed every aspect of the procedure from start to finish.

The Hub helped set up and oversee various stakeholder groups and subgroups which included GPs and other clinicians, patient representatives and PCT commissioners, to ensure that the needs of every individual group were fully considered.

Given the size and scale of the project, the timescales were tight, but the Hub, working closely with the PCT’s Project Procurement Team, was able to narrow down the applicants from a long list of interested parties to a shortlist of four providers who between them were able to offer the full range of services.

Outcomes
The contracts, which are worth up to £11m per year and cover everything from outpatient clinics including audiology services to X-ray and ultrasound departments and other diagnostic services, were signed on time. The hospital, with all attendant services, also opened on time.

As part of the process, the Hub ensured that there was a transfer of procurement and other commercial skills to the PCT, ensuring that its staff was well equipped to handle the ongoing contractual implications and monitor the performance of the providers.

The Brentwood Hospital project was the first major project of its kind for the Hub and has provided its own personnel with a wealth of experience which will help them deliver an even better service to PCT customers in future.

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