

Appendix H – Central Payments Service

1. Central payments service

Central Payments Service provides a comprehensive payments service which includes the processing of invoices and requisitions for payment, the production and issuing of payments to suppliers by BACS and cheque, notification to payees by post and email, archiving of payment details and providing customer support (primarily through responding to queries). CPS is also responsible for payment of all utility accounts (on contract) and provision of management information to customers. In addition the service also manages and promotes the purchasing card initiative (p cards). Underpinning this is a commitment to provide an efficient and effective and economic service through the introduction of new technologies and best working practices.

2. Response rate

In June 2007 the payments teams of Leeds City Council and Education Leeds were amalgamated to form the Central Payments Service and, therefore, this was the first year that the service was surveyed. Details from 2007/08 to 2009/10 are listed below in Table 1.

Year	Number of responses	% of Leeds Schools
2007/08	87	32.22%
2008/09	118	43.70%
2009/10	113	41.85%

Table 1 : Total number of responses by year.

3. Service providers

Those service providers recording five or more responses are shown below in Table 2. The table gives a break down of the responses into primary, secondary and other phases for 2009/10.

Service Provider	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10			
	Total	Total	Primary	Secondary	Other	Total
Central Payments Service	87	118	100	12	1	113

Table 2 : Total number of responses by service provider.

All the schools that responded to this question procured their payments service from the Central Payments Service provided by Leeds City Council.

4. Performance level

The key performance level review is measurable on a scale of 1 = very good, 2 = good, 3 = highly satisfactory, 4 = satisfactory, 5 = unsatisfactory, 6 = poor and 7 = very poor. The mean performance level is shown in Table 3 below.

Service Provider	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10		
	Avg	Performance Level	Avg	Performance Level	Avg	Performance Level	Change
Central Payments Service	2.80	Highly Satisfactory	3.42	Highly Satisfactory	2.96	Highly Satisfactory	Worse

Table 3 : Performance level by the service provider

The average performance score of the Central Payments Service has improved this year. The service is now in the top half of the highly satisfactory category. Many schools noted that the service has improved this year which is reflected in the performance score. Some schools, however, commented that there were still some problems with the service.

The full list of unedited comments is available in [Annex H](#)

5. Service providers – value for money

Schools were asked to record whether or not the service provider was delivering value for money. The responses are listed below in Table 4. The table sub-divides the responses into primary and secondary phases.

Service Provider	Primary			Secondary			Total		
	Yes	No	No Comment	Yes	No	No Comment	Yes	No	No Comment
Central Payments Service	63	14	23	10	0	2	73	14	26

Table 4 : Value for money by service providers

The majority of schools felt that the service did offer value for money.

6. Service providers – improvement

Schools were asked to record how the service provider could improve their service delivery and what steps they were taking to ensure that this was taking place. Table 5 lists the response to this question.

Service Provider	Primary			Secondary			Total		
	Yes	No	No Comment	Yes	No	No Comment	Yes	No	No Comment
Central Payments Service	63	7	30	7	3	2	70	10	33

Table 5 : Expected improvement by service providers

The majority of schools felt the Central Payments Service could improve although free text comments note that there have been significant improvements already.

Annex H – Payments

Central Payments Service, Leeds City Council

1. Please explain why you rate the service provider this way?

Positive responses

- On the whole the service is good. There have been a few occasions whereby invoices have not been input although they were definitely posted to Central Payments.
- No issues.
- Most payments processed in good time.
- Efficient. Advice available when needed.
- Don't have full use of service as input our own invoices into FMS (FAB) system but in any dealing we have they're very helpful.
- This service has improved during the last year.
- The payments service has improved during the past 12 months. When the system of scanning invoices was first introduced at BSC it was fraught with problems. Invoices were not scanned resulting in suppliers not being paid. These issues have now been addressed and the system is far better. If BSC need to be contacted by phone or email they are always helpful and respond quickly.
- Always very helpful.
- Always very helpful to staff, do up most to correct queries, have established a good working relationship.
- Prompt payments. Quick response to queries - very helpful.
- Service has improved since last year. Issues still remain as to how quickly invoices are paid.
- Processing of invoices / credit notes service has improved since last year. Purchasing card team have been very supportive.
- We feel that this service has made vast improvements - staff give their name when they answer the telephone, we can now send invoices for payment by email and receive an acknowledgement that the email has been received. CPS now contact school for minor queries so that invoices can be paid in a timely fashion.
- After initial changeover to Central Payments the service has now greatly improved.
- Always helpful in response to queries. Service provided on timely basis.
- Excellent always keen to help where ever possible. They give a very efficient service.
- Has got better since ED Finance payments moved to CPS.
- Quick response to telephone queries. A few paying in vouchers get paid incorrectly.
- Very rarely have chase invoices and staff always very helpful and friendly. Any queries are dealt with quickly.
- Generally very good. Enhancements in the system have created problems over the last year, but now improving. Good levels of help and advice available if needed.
- No major issues.
- Reliable, efficient service.
- Service much improved in the last few years. Could be improved by more training of staff to deal with invoice queries.
- Cannot comment on value for money as nothing to compare or contrast with.
- Service has improved over the past year although still too many errors made, informed this is due to workload. Purchasing care applied for but then stopped using them - as yet not received one.
- The service is improving but some invoices are still not being paid on time.
- Problems initially but great improvements made. Invoices going missing or paid late.
- Petty cash remittances always returned quickly.
- Occasional errors but dealt with promptly.
- Showing improvement after a poor start.
- Not had problems.

- Very rarely have problems but when they arise they are dealt with in an efficient manner. Staff on phones are very friendly and helpful.
- Fewer issues this year.
- Vast improvement.
- Payments made promptly. 9/10 times no problems.
- Overall a reliable service.
- No problem.
- All fine.
- Service has improved over the last few. Don't get phone calls from suppliers.
- Phone answered quickly and queries dealt with straight away. Email queries dealt with promptly. We have had a lot of Pcard problems dealt with quickly and patiently and we are looking forward to training programme.
- Excellent service. Staff helpful and polite.
- This service has improved throughout the year.
- Improvement this financial year but still problems, duplicate payments, non receipt of invoices.

Negative responses

- Personally I prefer the Sheffield LA system where schools print their own chqs and process their own accounts. Cuts out a whole layer of unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Have had problems with paperwork (Invoices and Petty Cash / Bank Claims) GOING MISSING. Purchase Card Initiative - no problems - staff always helpful.
- School gets many call from suppliers chasing money. Any queries CPS have taken weeks to come back to school and then are very late being paid. I appreciate that this team have a lot of paper to shift but we never had these problems under the old system and we didn't pay for said problems.
- Experienced IT difficulties when system moved over to WEB FAB but these have now been resolved. Also experienced problems with missing invoices that were mailed to payments, again this appears to be working OK now.
- Can be a bit slow.
- Issues with invoices going missing - even from a batch sent down. Lots of suppliers chasing us we then have to chase Central Payments. Have raised our concerns and some improvement. Do not have a regular contact.
- Schools invoices were dealt with better when we had our own payment clerk. Often the person answering the phone is not knowledgeable enough to deal with the query. Invoices going missing. Payments being made to wrong school account even when claim/invoice clearly states extended school.
- Invoices are continually getting lost and payments being made late as a result.
- Over the last 6/7 months the amount of letters/phone calls about late payments from suppliers has increased alarmingly. Paperwork going astray whether sent down by post or envopak. Telephone enquiries good.
- Still lots of issues.
- Often make mistakes with supply payroll. When we have sent invoices for payment, there is often a delay before contractors are paid.
- Quite a lot of invoices have been lost which makes it look like we haven't paid. Invoices are paid promptly by school but not by central services.
- Satisfactory in the main but issues with batches of invoices going astray, affecting prompt payment statistics for school. Changes put in place to scan and email invoices to rectify this problem.
- Service is generally satisfactory, however, problems with invoices not being received or arriving in the post room but then being lost have been experienced. Suppliers complain that payments are received from LCC without a breakdown of the payment also one not assigned to the current accounts. This leads to requests being sent out for invoices that have already been paid.
- Lack of communication from them with queries. Unclear timescales for payments.

- Service inconsistent. Cause embarrassment for schools with unacceptable delays in processing payments Education Leeds now has a reputation for very late payment! We recognise that some improvements have happened but not yet securely embedded.
- Often late payments are made, it could be more efficient.
- Sometimes payments are late resulting in us being sent late payment reminders.
- Too many chasing up enquiries when invoices not paid. School staff time taken off other duties to speak to suppliers who have not received payment. Sometimes CPS applying 30 day rule, and other times state invoices not received.
- Until recently the turn around on payment of invoices is very slow. Invoices seem to have got lost / not received. If an urgent request for payment is made it still will take 5 days before supplier receives payment which is unacceptable when a lot of these suppliers are small businesses. The service seems to be improving slightly.
- We pass invoices to central payments for payment as soon as possible. However, they are so slow at paying that we have been threatened with legal action by our suppliers / contractors on a number of occasions already this year.
- Lost Invoices.
- Sometimes service not what is expected. The tables at the end of the year are not a true reflection of payments being made. When we send them down to payments the date the invoice is stamped should be the date on which the 30 days is started.
- Payments after processing by school are slow - small contractors send reminders to school as they have waited for payment for so long - is this fair?
- After holidays there can sometimes be a problem with paying invoices because of a big influx.
- They don't always make payments on time even though the payments have been made by school.
- Speed of return and dealing with queries needs to improve.
- Timescale issues.
- Takes a long time from payments leaving school to actual payment - can frustrate customers we deal with. We use Purchasing Card to avoid this as often as possible.
- We have been chasing the payment card for a year and still haven't got one. This would improve the service.
- There have been a number of issues, late payments, incorrect VAT etc. However things do seem to have improved recently, I have had less cause to chase up.
- Have had problems with petty cash reimbursements being credited to wrong account causing more work in school.
- Errors appear on expenditure section of monthly reports.
- Slow in processing payments. History of losing payments.
- Invoices can be processed slowly. Not sure of timelines - does the 'clock start' when we date an invoice or when it is received?