



Case study

Cornovii Trust

Cornovii Trust was established in 2022 after the merging of two successful smaller trusts. It's made up of two large high schools and five primary schools, located around the Alsager, Crewe and Nantwich areas. The trust is set to expand in 2026 with the addition of another high school.

The trust's 500+ staff payroll had been handled by an external provider but a change in system led to some major payment issues.

Trust HR and payroll lead Sharon Houghton says: "Everybody needs their money every month, and it is especially important that you get your money at Christmas, but people didn't get paid. We were having to do payments through each school and then they had to claim the money back in January."

In 2023 the trust decided to go out to tender and chose Strictly Education. In 2025, the service was transferred to Neo People Management. "We were a little nervous at first, but it has been a seamless transition," says Sharon.

Adding new employees to the payroll and bank reconciliation were once laborious and time-consuming processes but these are no longer an issue, says Sharon.

She explains: "With our previous provider if we wanted to add a new starter to the payroll after a set deadline there would be a flat out 'sorry, we can't do it' and we would have to wait until the following month.

"With Neo, our cut off for a typical month might be the third of the month for a pay day in the middle of the month and we could still get a new starter on to the system just days before. That's a huge difference in terms of the system's efficiency."

If there are any issues – and these are usually minor – Neo People Management's ticketing system has proven to be fast and efficient.

“One of the biggest things I like is the support that we get through the ticketing system. It is fantastic,”

says Sharon. “If we realise we've made a mistake, we'll get in touch with Neo through the ticketing system and they'll get back to us straight away and then fix it.

“Every ticket that we raise gets its own identification number. If you haven't had a response, then it's easy to chase it up.

“We did have reservations at first because it's human nature to want to talk to someone when you've got an issue because you feel that it's the best way to get a quick resolution.

“They look at all the tickets every day and respond as quickly as possible. Very often I'll raise a ticket and sometimes the response might be a day later, but we know that if it is an urgent matter they'll deal with it on that day. We've never experienced that level of responsiveness before.”

Most importantly, the Neo People Management payroll service does its main job – ensuring that staff are paid correctly and on time – well. “We've changed payroll twice in a very short period of time, but the most important thing is that people are paid correctly and on time,” says Sharon. “We may have had an odd query that we had to resolve, but this has been nothing compared to what we had before.”



It's a service that Sharon Houghton would recommend to other trusts. “I'd absolutely recommend them. I think the whole system is easy to use. It's straightforward. You get those quick responses to queries, and I can't fault the support.

“I also like the fact that we have monthly catch-ups with Neo People Management. If we have got any particular concerns that can't be dealt with through the ticketing system we know that they will follow up and get things done.”

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