

# DC Leisure Management Ltd

[www.dcleisure.co.uk](http://www.dcleisure.co.uk)

## Company description

DC Leisure Management Limited (DCLM) specialises in the development and management of leisure facilities in partnership with local authorities throughout the UK. The company is one of the country's largest leisure management operators, with over 30 clients and over 100 leisure centres in its portfolio, and an annual turnover of around £80m. Today DCLM is one of the largest leisure contractors in the UK, employing approximately 7,000 people.

## Sector

Leisure

## Product/service

HR Outsourcing service

## Challenge

DCLM did not have an HR department, so the company tended to respond to HR issues as they occurred rather than create strategies to avoid issues developing. The group payroll manager had taken on responsibility for managing HR matters and answering HR queries by default, and this role was becoming an increasing burden on his time. HR administration was carried out by receptionists/administrators at the individual centres.

## Solution

An outsourced HR solution means that DCLM now has a smooth-running HR function, with processes in place to manage everything from the complicated administration of employing large numbers of staff on a temporary basis (to meet summer peaks in activity), to guiding the company through a major restructure and site closures.

## Benefits

- The administration burden of issuing offer letters and contracts to the 1,000+ new starters annually has been taken away from site receptionists/administrators and is now managed centrally by Northgate HR
- During a recent major restructure at DCLM, Northgate HR provided invaluable support to the board, helping to ensure that the process was legally compliant and provided training to managers in handling redundancies
- Northgate HR now provides regular briefings and management training to DCLM's c. 170 managers from across the UK
- DCLM has access to its own dedicated HR team at Northgate HR to provide strategic and operational consultancy on any HR topic at any time

## Background

DC Leisure Management works with local councils to develop and manage leisure centres across the country. DCLM is responsible for approx 120 leisure facilities, and employs 1,200 permanent staff and around 5,500 casual and fixed term workers to handle the rise in activity experienced over summer and during school holidays.

The organisation originally had no formal HR structure at all. As a consequence, group payroll manager Nick Browne took charge of HR matters in addition to his regular day job. The burden on his time had become too much, and Northgate HR was contracted to provide an outsourced HR service from April 2004.

One of the first tasks Northgate HR tackled was to centralise new starter processes, which were previously handled by individual leisure centres. Northgate HR then reviewed and updated DCLM's existing suite of HR documents and managers' guides covering processes including absence, holidays and health and safety. In addition Northgate HR updated the staff handbook, which was made available to all employees as a reference document.

A telephone/e-mail 'help-desk' service was also provided, which gave managers direct access to the Northgate HR team with any HR-related questions. The team of advisors at Northgate HR are all CIPD-qualified professionals who are responsible for keeping on top of all developments in employment law and HR best practice so they can advise clients on any HR topic. This consequently removes the need for clients to engage expensive employment lawyers and/or subscribe to HR reference materials and websites.



# "What our customer said"

"In this time of constantly changing employment legislation, we found it invaluable to have Northgate's expertise on hand to advise and guide us through some major reorganisation."

**Group Payroll Manager  
DC Leisure Management Limited**

On an administrative level, Northgate HR also took on the responsibility of issuing contracts and offer letters to new recruits, which was previously carried out by the administrators at each individual leisure centre. This was a considerable internal burden, as DCLM recruits around 1000 new employees per year.

Northgate HR's support was critical when DCLM carried out a major restructure of its finance function, which moved finance managers previously based at local sites to DCLM's headquarters. The company also closed a major site for redevelopment. Northgate HR helped DCLM ensure that full consultation took place prior to the restructuring programme, provided training to managers in handling redundancies, and vitally, ensured that all the processes were legally compliant, so the company minimised the risk of tribunal claims. There were in fact no tribunal claims or internal appeals as a result of these major changes. Group Payroll Manager, Nick Browne commented "In this time of constantly changing employment legislation, we found it invaluable to have Northgate's expertise on hand to advise and guide us through some major reorganisation."

Northgate HR's role isn't confined to process and strategy – the company also provides DCLM with training workshops at its regular conferences, attended by around 130 managers from each of DCLM's sites across the UK. Topics have included performance management, delivering effective feedback and absence management. Chief Executive, Steve Philpott praised Northgate's contribution to the conferences "Northgate made a fantastic contribution to the company conference. The

quality of the presentations at the workshops was excellent and the feedback from all the attendees was extremely positive. The workshops added a new and exciting dimension, and all the General Managers left with some very useful information and tips on how to do their jobs better."

DCLM also runs a bi-monthly senior management forum, called The People Management Group, which meets to discuss the company's HR strategy. Northgate HR attends all these meetings to advise the group.

Moving forward, DC Leisure also plans to involve Northgate HR in the implementation of management competency frameworks and the establishment of an information and consultation group. All these measures mean the company's HR function is fighting fit and ready for future growth.

## For more information

With the skills, experience and market knowledge of Northgate HR behind you, you too can be well placed to translate the HR challenges your organisation is facing into powerful opportunities.

For an initial discussion about your requirements, call us on 0800 035 0545. Email: [hrrsolutions@northgate-is.com](mailto:hrrsolutions@northgate-is.com) or visit [www.northgate-is.com/hrs](http://www.northgate-is.com/hrs)



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