

## phs Group acquires Countrywide Healthcare Supplies

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A Yorkshire-based supplier of healthcare and cleaning products to care homes has been acquired by workplace hygiene services provider [phs Group](#).

The sale of Countrywide Healthcare Supplies is the first deal for Manchester-headquartered corporate finance practice Vertex, which was established earlier this year. The financial terms of the deal are undisclosed.

Countrywide Healthcare has its offices, warehouse and distribution centre at a 110,000sq ft base in Barnsley and has been supplying care homes across the UK with healthcare products along with interior design and fit-out services since its inception 28 years ago.

The business, which has more than 130 staff, is led by managing director Sarah Robinson and finance director Richard Hannah.

Its sale to phs Group provides an exit for founder and former chairman Alastair Kitching and co-director Jeremy Gilson. It also marks a successful exit for Octopus Ventures, which has backed the business since 2014.

The Vertex team who advised the company on the sale included managing director James Darlington and deal adviser Josh Malyan.

Caerphilly-based phs Group is a specialist provider of washroom, waste management, storage, testing, laundry and other services to over 300,000 businesses across the UK. With a workforce of more than 3,300 staff, the group also operates internationally.

James Darlington said: “We are beyond proud to have delivered a fantastic result for the shareholders of Countrywide Healthcare in the first deal for Vertex.

“We are thrilled that everyone’s hard work and patience have been recognised and we are sure that Sarah and Richard will take the business to new heights with the support of phs Group, benefiting greatly from its strong national presence and buying power along with its comprehensive distribution network and growing client base.

“There are tremendous synergies between the companies and excellent opportunities for them to continue to go from strength-to-strength. We wish all parties well for the future.”

Sarah Robinson said: “We are excited to join forces with phs Group and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead.

“This marks a new chapter for Countrywide Healthcare, but it remains business as usual and our day-to-day operations will not change. We wish Alastair and Jeremy all the best as they enjoy a well-deserved early retirement and we are grateful to Octopus Ventures, who have championed and supported our expansion over the past 10 years.

“Both phs Group and Countrywide Healthcare are growing businesses and we share strong cultural values within our organisations and towards the world around us.

“We believe that this partnership will deliver more opportunities for service excellence and growth, which in turn will provide increased benefits for our respective customers.”

Alastair Kitching said: “Vertex has been an invaluable partner throughout the sale process, offering unwavering support and professionalism to ensure a smooth transaction for Countrywide Healthcare.”

A team at Shoosmiths’ Birmingham office, led by Alastair Peet and Gregg Harris, provided legal advice to Countrywide Healthcare, and Claritas provided tax advice.

Blake Morgan supported phs Group with legal advice and Deloitte provided the buyer with financial and tax due diligence advice.

Vertex was set up earlier this year to provide sell-side advice and equity fundraising support to SMEs across the UK.

It has its headquarters at the Manchester International Office Centre near Manchester Airport, and additional offices in Birmingham and London.

James said Vertex has developed a strong pipeline of company sales and equity fundraising opportunities, with a number of transactions pending across multiple sectors.