

Annex

Transforming customer service across the public sector

Principles for a new design

1. Introduction

This is a critical moment in the history of local government. A national debate is underway about its structure, functions and financing. This includes the Lyons Inquiry, local:vision and the proposed Local Government White Paper and Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR07).

Through the Varney Review announced in Budget 2006 (see below) the Government is seeking to develop a vision for the transformation of public services, including those delivered through local office networks and contact centres, to be implemented through CSR07.

In *Closer to People and Places*, the LGA sets out a compelling vision for local government including a wider role for councils in the governance of localities and the delivery of public services. Key objectives include the redesign of public services around the customer and the bringing together of all public services in the area in strong partnerships.

This paper identifies principles to inform the design of public services and the customer interface in particular. It includes the outputs of a practitioner workshop organised by LGA, IDeA and the Efficiency Champion on 22 May 2006.

2. Background

Varney Review

Budget 2006 announced that Sir David Varney (Executive Chairman of HMRC and former CEO of O2) would advise the Treasury on the opportunities for transforming the delivery of public services (the Varney Review).

This work will feed into Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR07) which will set government spending plans for the period 2008/09 to 2010/11.

The Review will focus on achieving efficiency gains and improving the customer experience across the following areas.

Improving the customer interface

- Developing a governing vision for transforming service provision through all channels (for example internet, mobile and face-to-face provision).
- Examining the opportunities to rationalise contact centres and the scope to match and better private sector best practice.
- Examining the potential for rationalisation of local office provision by central government and the possibility of developing joint one-stop shops with local government.

Improving customer information management

- Identifying opportunities arising from standardising key common underlying processes on customer information management, including identity management, and the scope for data-sharing between government departments.

The intention is that, wherever possible, the Review will build on work already in train including CSR07 reviews and the *Transformational Government* strategy.

The aim is to complete the review by autumn 2006 with an interim report to be presented to the Chancellor in July. The Government is actively seeking to involve local government in the Review. There is a parallel, and related, review of asset management which also forms part of CSR07.

Future of local government

The *Devolved Decision-Making Review*, published in parallel with Budget 2004, launched a debate about devolution to local government. This has been taken forward through the local:vision process led by DCLG and finds its most recent expression in the concept of “double devolution” under consideration for the Local Government White Paper .

The May 2006 interim report of the *Lyons Inquiry* supports the call for devolution to local government and advocates a more prominent role for councils as the “conveners” and joiners-up of local public services supported by new powers and duties. It makes a compelling case for local decision-making and choice based on local knowledge.

“Local authorities have a particularly wide and deep understanding of the areas and people that they serve [...]. The local authority has a responsibility for the well-being of the whole area as well as a historical and on-going relationship with the area through time. As a multi-service agency, the authority can also draw intelligence and understanding from a wide range of services.

Central government agencies, such as local Primary Care Trusts and the Jobcentre Plus network, will want and have local information to inform the delivery of their services but it is unlikely to be of comparable depth or complexity.”(pp27-28)

It goes on to explain how councils are best placed to engage citizens in the design and delivery of public services (“co-production”).

“...local authorities can help to influence [...] lifestyle decisions by enabling local people to co-produce services, letting them have their say about what they want and need from public services. By involving local people in their design and delivery, local services are also likely to be more efficient and effective.” (p28)

In *Closer to People and Places* (May 2006), the Local Government Association (LGA) sets out its vision for local government based on the “decentralising, devolving and deregulating” agenda shared with the Government. This is to be set within a new performance and accountability framework focused on the achievement of 30 nationally agreed outcomes (with a corresponding reduction in national targets and attendant efficiency savings in regulation and inspection).

Achievement of the vision, in the LGA’s view, depends on bold and radical reform to models of governance and public service delivery. This should include -

- Redesign of services by and for the customer
- Bringing together of all public services in each area, in strong partnerships across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.

The introduction of 24-hour contact centres and online services are cited as examples of how councils are redesigning public services; some councils are now providing “a single high street front door for all council services.” (p17)

Local people must have the opportunity to shape public services regardless of who delivers them.

Not only do redesigned services bring greater choice and better access for local people, they also produce efficiency savings. The biggest gains are achieved when public sector partners collaborate to achieve service improvements and efficiencies across the whole system.

“There is significant scope for efficiency gains, but they require action across, rather than within, organisations at the local level, to reduce duplication and improve synergy between different services and achieve economies in the use of accommodation and back office services.” (p37)

Strong partnerships that include all local public service providers are key to success because “...many public services are delivered not by local government, but locally by national agencies. It is therefore the ability to join services locally across the whole of the public sector that can produce a step change...” (p17)

The leadership role within local partnerships falls logically to democratically elected, multi-purpose local authorities. Local leadership is likely to succeed where other approaches fail because councils are closer to people and places.

“Local government being multi-functional in itself, and the only body with responsibility for the whole area, is uniquely placed to join up services at a local level on behalf of both community and the individual user.” (p19)

Closer to People and Places advocates that Local Area Agreements are developed into “contracts” between the local public service partners.

“The Local Area Agreement would be used as the mechanism to join together the totality of public sector funding and resources for the area behind the shared vision and ambitions.” (p 19)

LAA's should incentivise collaboration to achieve transformation of public services and efficiency gains.

“To incentivise back-office rationalisation as well as joining up front-line services, we propose that the resulting efficiency savings should be fed back to and for the locality, by means of the next generation Local Area Agreements.” (p37)

The LGA argues that a new settlement between central and local government must be enshrined in legislation which has the commitment of all the relevant Secretaries of State.

“Only with such cross-government commitment would these departments’ delivery agencies be empowered to join up with one another, and with councils, to shape the vision for the area, and take decisions tailored for the place and people.”

This includes a new “duty to cooperate” to be placed on all public service partners in the LAA.

3. Our customers

Local authorities deliver public services to a large number of customer groups in localities including -

- Older people
- Children
- Young people
- People with disabilities
- Workless people
- Tenants
- Benefit claimants
- Planning applicants

Some services are delivered to citizens “collectively” including environmental services and regulatory services.

In other instances businesses and other organisations are our customers.

These same customer groups are served by other public bodies with a presence in localities including -

- Primary Care Trusts
- Jobcentre Plus
- The Pensions Agency
- Police
- Probation Service
- Learning and Skills Council
- Connexions

Each agency tends to have a partial view of the customer and our customers experience public services as fragmented.

4. Our assets

The public sector has made a significant investment in local office networks and in contact centres for telephone and web-based transactions. This investment was accelerated through the e-government programme.

Important public services continue to be delivered through other channels including face-to-face in customers' own homes and other community settings (particularly social care and health services).

In local government the trajectory is to move away from dedicated facilities (area housing and social services offices, benefits offices) towards walk-in customer service centres and contact centres - linked by CRM systems - that provide access to a wide range of council services, including services with high transaction volumes like housing benefits (a "one stop service").

DWP has followed a similar path through Jobcentre Plus integrating job centre and social security office networks and handling initial benefit applications and enquiries through contact centres.

It is a logical step, already evident in some parts of the country, to extend the "one stop service" concept across a wider range of public services and to look at how the customer experience of our "field services" can be improved through greater integration of assessment and delivery and the use of mobile technology.

There is a corresponding need to explore more efficient models for the transactional processing that takes place in the "back office" and for the delivery of corporate support services. However, that is outside the scope of the present paper.

The data that the public sector holds on customers (customer intelligence) is another major asset. But barriers (legal, technical and practical) seem to stand in the way of this being shared effectively.

5. Principles for a new design

Local government is already realising the benefits of the first phase of the transformation. Councils themselves are moving from silo-based organisations to organisations joined up around the customer. The benefits are better services to customers and better staff utilization within the organisation.

We are now moving into stage 2: the cross-agency customer service function. There are again opportunities to improve customer service and to reduce costs through asset rationalisation and better utilisation of staff. The **Annex** gives examples of where this is already happening on the ground.

Stage 3 would see the public sector reaping real benefits from cross-agency management of customer problems and better service planning.

Stage 3 will require a reconfiguration of the “assets” at the disposal of the public sector in order to radically improve the customer experience and reduce waste and duplication of effort across the whole system. Government will need to remove barriers to this reconfiguration.

The new design must recognise the local leadership role of councils. As LGA and the Lyons team have argued, local government is best placed to take on this role because of its closeness to local people and understanding of places.

The following design principles derive from this spatial perspective –

- Engage local people in the design and delivery of services
- Create a unified view of the customer
- Redesign the whole process not just the customer interface
- Build on the infrastructure that is already there
- Forge strong local partnerships
- Align incentives
- Co-ordinate business planning and investment strategies across agencies
- Plan and co-ordinate procurement

The principles are discussed briefly below.

Engage local people in the design and delivery of services

Models for accessing public services must be geared to local circumstances and the preferences of people living in particular places. The models will therefore vary from locality to locality. This is “postcode choice” as *Closer to People and Places* describes it.

The model for each locality needs to fit the specific demographic, socio-economic and physical circumstances of the area as well as the preferences of distinct customer groups. The research evidence¹ suggests that differences between places will increase not diminish over the CSR07 period and beyond.

¹ See, for example, ODPM (2006) *All Our Futures – The Challenges for Local Government in 2015* and Lyons Inquiry (2006) *National Prosperity, Local Choice and Civic Engagement – A New Partnership between Central and Local Government for the 21st Century*.

The appropriate model should be established by engaging people on a locality basis as well as by customer group, with a clear leadership role for the council as the elected, general purpose authority for the area.

Engagement should not end with the design. Councils are also engaging people as “co-producers” who play an active part in the delivery of solutions to meet their own and others’ needs and this approach should be developed further.

Create a unified view of the customer

The aspiration must be to provide the same quality of customer service irrespective of channel (a one-stop “service”), including the tailoring of services to customer needs and preferences and the development of new services.

From a technology point of view this means that the same sort of information (subject to privacy and security requirements) should be available to the self-service user, the mobile worker in a customer’s home, the contact centre agent and the person behind a counter in a customer service centre (one stop shop).

Government action is required to remove the remaining legal impediments to data sharing among public sector agencies and to address divergent interpretations of data protection legislation so that a unified view of each customer can be built.

It is a challenge for all of us to promote a “culture” of sharing and to adjust our day-to-day practices. As a first step Government could catalogue the types of customer data held by different agencies as most actors in the system have little visibility at the present time of the customer intelligence held by other agencies.

Redesign the whole process not just the customer interface

It will not be sufficient to redesign the customer interface alone (the channels).

A customer-centred approach means redesigning the whole business process from the first contact with the customer through service delivery to ongoing relationship management.

In a multi-agency environment a “whole systems” approach is necessary. This must include private sector and third sector partners.

A systems approach is imperative if we are to both improve the total customer experience and realise business benefits including efficiency savings.

Build on the infrastructure that is already there

The public sector has made a big investment in technology and accommodation. Investment is continuing.

It will be necessary to accelerate development in some localities and parts of the public sector, but the general approach should be to build on the foundations that are already there and to make smarter use of the assets and people at our disposal rather than to create something new.

Forge strong local partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) have been established across the country and have achieved notable successes.

To date LSPs have tended to focus on what the Lyons team calls “place-shaping” (sustainable development of the locality).

The advent of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) has taken LSPs deeper into the territory of main programmes and this has been reinforced by the establishment of executive structures bringing together the local public service partners (Local Public Service Board) and engaging other service delivery partners in the private and third sectors.

Strong locality based partnerships are a critical success factor for transformation projects, particularly those involving a commitment of resources by the partners. This is not simply about relationships, it is about business planning and incentive regimes (see below).

Co-ordinate business planning and investment strategies

At the present time, the business planning processes, investment and asset management strategies of local authorities and other public sector agencies with a presence in localities are not co-ordinated.

While councils account to local communities, other agencies in the LSP account hierarchically to ministers.

Local Area Agreements need to be extended to cover main programme activities and must be supported by coordinated business planning, investment and asset management among local public service partners. This should be non-negotiable.

Align incentive regimes

At the present time local authorities are incentivised to deliver improved services and efficiency savings for localities while other agencies operating in the same localities are incentivised to deliver efficiency savings and other objectives set centrally. The incentive is to deliver for the Minister not for the locality.

The LGA has called for LAAs to become “contracts” between local public sector partners and between central and local government, supported by a duty on partners to co-operate with the local authority.

This framework should provide for benefits (including efficiency savings) achieved by collaboration among local public service partners to be shared among the partners in the locality and recycled into improved services for the locality.

Plan and co-ordinate procurement

Some of the barriers to collaboration between agencies are the consequence of uncoordinated procurement decisions (e.g. a legacy of many different CRM systems which require expensive adaptors if they are to talk to each other).

Acquisition, adaptation and upgrading of technology (particularly CRM systems and mobile devices) needs to be planned and co-ordinated across agencies. Core standards should be agreed.

Joint procurement should be promoted both for technology acquisition and for outsourcing in strategic partnerships where that is the chosen route. This should be underpinned by protocols governing roles and responsibilities for procurement and contract management and the procedures to be followed in multi-agency environments.

Annex

Blackburn with Darwen Local Public Service Board

In Blackburn with Darwen a Local Public Service Board (LPSB) has been in operation since November 2004. It comprises health, DWP, police, LSC, Connexions and the local college as well as the council and Government Office.

Efficiency and service improvement are priorities for the LPSB and this is being taken forward in five workstreams –

- Assets (co-location, shared use of assets)
- Procurement (joining up for procurement of common commodities)
- Back office (transactional services, support services)
- Research and information (sharing costs, joined up commissioning)
- Benefits entitlements (Joint Team with DWP and involvement of other partners including PCT and police).

The board is integral to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) structure and central to the implementation of the “single pot” Local Area Agreement (LAA) signed in March 2006.

The LAA states the aims of the LPSB as being -

- To exercise a leadership and governance role, identifying and articulating the needs and aspirations of local people.
- To oversee the £800m of public expenditure in our locality and to align the relevant budget streams through joint planning and resource allocation for the better achievement of shared priorities and more efficient service procurement.
- To act as an agent for the transformational change needed if new forms of public service delivery are to become embedded across many separate workforces and if public perception of the value and importance of good government at a local level are to be heightened in the long term.

The LPSB is focusing in particular on three areas (young unemployed, young offenders, alcohol misuse) to assess the potential for better co-ordinated activity and pooling of resources across public and voluntary sectors. It will oversee research and test the concept of “upstream interventions delivering downstream payback”.

This is indicative of the LPSB’s desire to think radically and develop transformational approaches that cut across traditional organisational

boundaries.

In drawing up their LAA Blackburn with Darwen undertook a ground-breaking 'resource mapping' exercise which provided the council and its partners with a picture of where public resources are being spent in the locality and how this compared to the priorities set out in the Community Plan.

By 2007 all single tier and county councils will have signed an LAA. Many have taken a cue from Telford and Wrekin's pilot single pot LAA and the principle that "all public servants in Telford and Wrekin are there to serve the people of Telford and Wrekin". This is the local public services team.

Most of the councils that have signed LAAs have established an LPSB or a similar executive structure as part of their governance arrangements. Many more are considering the model. The LPSB model has been championed by excellent ("four star") councils, of which Blackburn with Darwen is one, through the Innovation Forum.

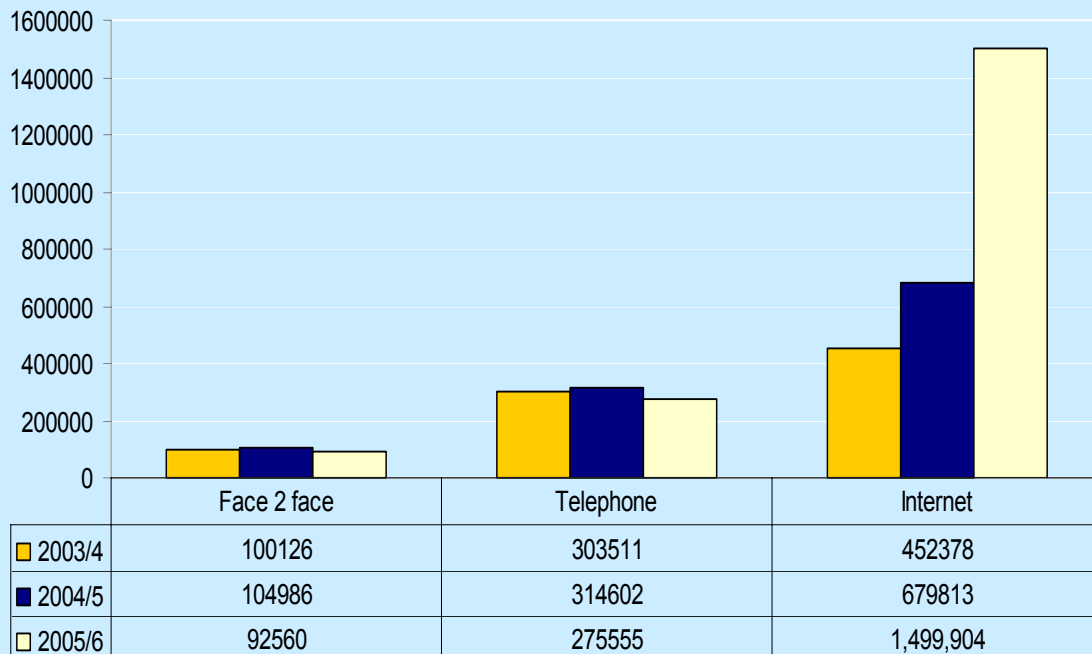
eTameside

Tameside MBC signed up to early delivery of the 2005 e-government target in its LPSA (precursor of the LAA) and established itself as a pathfinder in the electronic service delivery field.

The council has achieved notable success in migrating customers to channels that are more convenient for them and which deliver efficiency gains to the council.

The following charts tell the story.

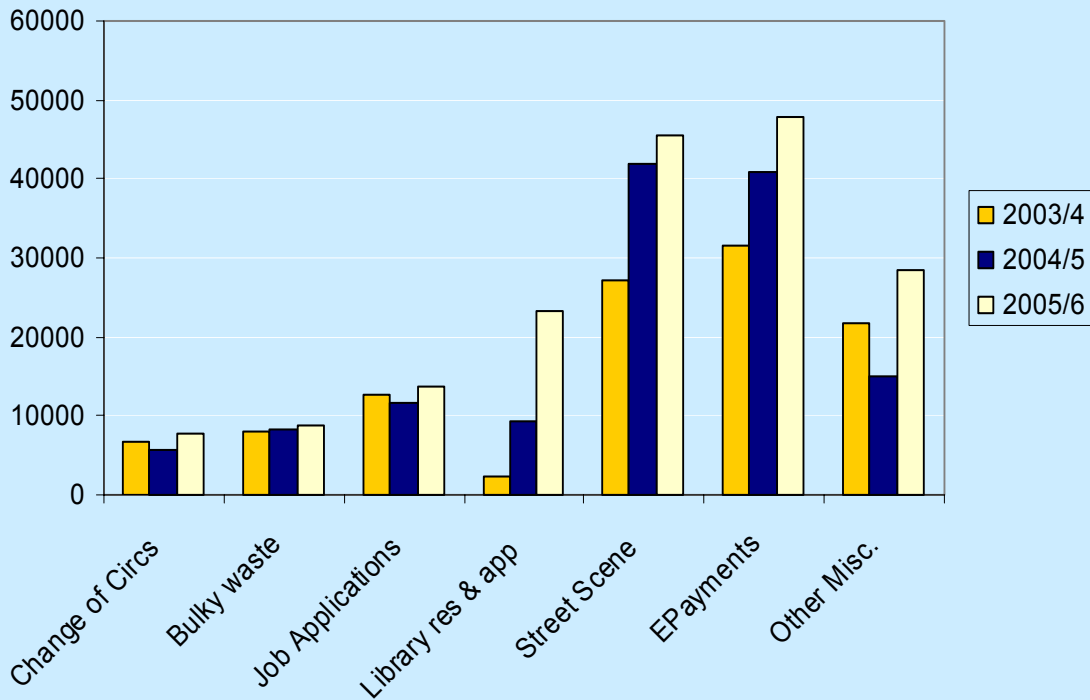
e-Service take-up



Transaction costs

	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6
Face to face	£15.50	£14.65	£16.20
Telephone	£1.59	£1.39	£1.55
Website	.38p	.25p	.12p

Self-service transactions 2005



In CPA terms Tameside is an excellent “four star” council that is improving well.

Worcestershire Hub

The Worcestershire Hub is an initiative that grew out of the Worcestershire Partnership (the LSP) in the late 1990s. It has been taken forward by the Worcestershire e-Government Partnership.

The organisations in the partnership share a vision and a commitment to improve services and to increase the choices citizens have in how they access services. They are also committed to securing more efficient and effective ways of working.

The core members of the partnership are -

- Bromsgrove District Council
- City of Worcester Council
- Malvern Hills District Council
- Redditch Borough Council
- Worcestershire County Council
- Wychavon District Council
- Wyre Forest District Council

The Hub programme has been delivered through a strategic partnership with Hewlett Packard working in a consortium with Deloitte. This has enabled new processes and technology to be introduced including a common CRM system and call centre telephony.

Today the Hub comprises a web portal and a network of seven customer service centres supported by telephone contact centres. In time additional smaller centres will be put in place throughout the county.

The Hub provides customers with access to District and County Council services as well as those of a number of partner organisations. Customer services advisors handle all types of enquiries covering the complete range of services.

With customer service advisors handling 80% of the calls at the first point of contact and customers increasingly using the portal – the self-service option – time is being freed up in the back office.

In addition to being a model of successful county-district collaboration, the Worcestershire Hub has made important steps forward in integrating other partners' services.

The Evesham Community Contact Centre is co-located with West Mercia Police and soon to be Jobcentre Plus.

The centre in Droitwich is co-located with Jobcentre Plus and Jobcentre Plus services are also available at Pershore One Stop Shop (including Job Points which job seekers can use to find out about vacancies).

Most centres also hold “surgeries” for other organisations e.g. Citizen's Advice Bureaux, probation service, Pensions Service.

Going forward, the partnership will be working with other partners, where appropriate, with a view to introducing other non-council services and will focus on opportunities for further efficiencies through shared services including revenues and benefits.

Worcestershire County Council is an excellent “four star” council. District Councils have a productive relationship with the County and there is mutual respect and trust across the Hub partnership.

Liverpool Direct

Liverpool Direct Ltd (LDL) is Liverpool City Council's celebrated £300m joint venture with BT established in 2001. Under this 11 year partnership, BT has agreed to invest £60m in the city.

LDL is making a major contribution to the transformation of the city and contributing savings of around £5m a year to the City Council.

The joint venture company is 80.1% owned by BT and operates under a profit-sharing arrangement. Overall some 850 staff have been seconded to it. They continue to be council employees and remain on local government terms and conditions.

Liverpool Direct was first set up in 1998. The decision to seek a private sector partner followed a best value review of ICT. Liverpool Direct was included alongside ICT, HR, payroll and revenues and benefits in the joint venture.

The partnership led to investment in a CRM system, replacement of legacy systems and the upgrading of telephony, followed by the building of a prestige new contact centre.

Today Liverpool Direct is the largest council contact centre in the country. It is open 24-hours a day, seven days a week. It employs over 300 staff dealing with 55 per cent of council services. There are plans to extend it further, making it a 450 seat centre which deals with 80 per cent of council services.

The centre currently handles around 50,000 calls per week and in 90% of cases the call is resolved the first time without the caller having to be put through to another team.

In 2003 LDL established the first 24-hour social care contact centre in the UK – "Care Line". Customer advisors and social workers are making huge improvements in the service, with concerns about vulnerable people looked at by social workers far more quickly.

There are plans to provide services to other agencies. LDL already provides contact centre services for local housing association CDS Housing.

Through LDL, the City Council has also set up a network of 10 walk-in One Stop Shops across the city. This will rise to 12 in 2006.

The joint venture has helped the City Council move from one of the poorest performing local authorities in England to a "two star" CPA rated council.

The revenues and benefits service has dramatically reduced the amount of time to deal with claims from 140 days to just 14.

LDL was named best local authority call centre in the UK in 2004 by the Call Centre Association and best UK call centre at the Planning Forum innovation awards in 2005.

Electronic financial assessments in Sutton

The London Borough of Sutton has achieved efficiency savings of up to 47 % demonstrated by the use of electronic financial assessments enabled by changes of process, places and technologies.

It has equipped its financial assessments team with tablet PCs onto which staff can write directly when they carry out home-based interviews for people in need of financial support.

Clients can now see how the figures are worked out - leading to fewer complaints. And a letter is generated on the spot about the contribution clients need to make to their care package.

Overall there has been a 30% increase in productivity as financial assessments now take one week to process rather than 4-5 weeks.

St Edmundsbury Public Service Village

The Public Service Village (PSV) is a collaboration between St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Suffolk County Council and the following partners:

- Suffolk Police
- Primary Care Trust
- Magistrates Court
- West Suffolk College
- Voluntary / community projects

Focused on the western area of the county this is one of a number of “joint ventures” between the County Council and District Councils intended to create a network of customer service centres across the county.

Established in 2004, the aim of the PSV partnership is to co-locate and integrate all partners onto a single site in the town in order to ‘deliver improved outcomes for local communities in the west of the county through more efficient use of public resources’. The objectives are as follows.

- A single modern property designed around the customer instead of single sites. Citizens will receive ‘personalised services which meet individual needs and preferences’.
This is seen as an opportunity to improve the management and use of public assets.
- The delivery of significant operational efficiencies for each partner, both cashable and in terms of improve customer access and services
- To join up key public sector services to improve performance
 - e.g. Homelessness }
Adult Social Care } delivering joined-up services
Voluntary organisations }
Neighbourhood engagement. }

The project has been fully supported by the East of England Regional Centre of Excellence, which contributed funding for the outline business case in 2005. The programme successfully completed 4ps Gateway Review 1 in November 2005 and received political approval by the lead partners in January 2006.

The programme management team is now in place and operational, and the procurement phase is just starting. Key tasks this year include the completion of the procurement stage, detailed design, and a successful planning application. Construction will commence in 2007 with an opening date scheduled for December 2008.

Newcastle Joint Service Centres with Health

By 2007/08 Newcastle City Council will have put in place a network of six customer service centres across the city. The first centres have already been established in the Civic Centre, the East End (interim) and Outer West. These centres provide citizens and local businesses with access to over 90 council services.

A significant feature of the City's approach is that four of the sites will be delivered through the local LIFT partnership (Newcastle and North Tyneside LIFT).

The first to come on stream through LIFT is the Kenton building. In the Kenton scheme the customer service centre, a primary care centre (incorporating both GP practices and PCT facilities) and a new library are all located on the same site.

Newcastle City Council is a CPA "three star" council that is improving well.

LIFT (the Local Improvement Finance Trust) was launched in 2001 as a new model for the delivery of investment in premises to bring about improvements in primary care services and other health-related services. There are some 52 schemes across England.

Local LIFT companies (joint ventures led by a competitively procured private sector partner) deliver the investment. They own and maintain the premises, leasing them to PCTs, GPs, local authorities, dentists etc.

LIFT procurements are led by health authorities or PCTs. Local authorities can participate in local LIFT companies and this model is increasingly seen as a vehicle for delivery of joint service centres (building on early examples like the Dudley Ladies Walk Centre and Stoke Bentilee Joint Service Centre developed through PFI).

4ps has been working with some 40 local authorities on LIFT supporting them through an extranet, technical guidance and advice on obtaining financial assistance.

Staffordshire eGovernment Partnership

Local government in Staffordshire recognised in 2001 that customer expectations are growing and that customers require better quality services and greater choice. As a result the Staffordshire Connects partnership was established.

This is a unique sub-regional partnership of 10 local authorities committed to a shared vision of “joined-up services delivered seamlessly to afford the customer a consistent, high-quality experience, irrespective of location”.

The major and nationally-significant achievement of Staffordshire Connects has been to enable seamless access to services county-wide via convenient delivery channels. The achievement has been founded on three fundamentally important building blocks:

- Joint implementation and management of a technical infrastructure running on Staffordshire County Council’s award-winning broadband network and enabling partners to accept service requests for each other
- A Joined-up Directory facilitating first-time messaging across more than 12,000 partner employees, thus enhancing citizen signposting
- A joined-up e-Payments solution common to five partners and hosted by a sixth: facilitating 24/7 payment for services via Automated Telephone Payment, manual telephone call or access via partner websites/ emerging single gateway.

With the needs of the community paramount from day one, the partnership developed a vision of “joined-up services delivered seamlessly to afford the customer a consistent, high-quality experience, irrespective of location”. Research identified that 80 per cent of residents saw the telephone as their future preferred method of accessing services, with 15 per cent citing face-to-face access. Only five per cent of respondents said they would prefer to access services electronically.

Accordingly, the partnership procured a single, integrated CRM system designed not only to achieve the vision of seamless service delivery by enabling partners to accept service requests for each other but also to benefit citizens irrespective of access channels.

As well as enabling partners to accept service requests for each other, the new system allows customer service advisors to log and track requests online, thus increasing customer satisfaction. The system also offers the capability to trigger service requests for citizens, on the basis of patterns identified in the

authenticated citizen account.

To support the consultation findings, the CRM system can be deployed by customer advisors receiving a service request via a *telephone* call, *face-to-face* visit or *e-Form* delivered by the citizen (either authenticated or anonymous) from his/her local authority website or, potentially, from the single gateway.

The partners are now operating the system live. Staffordshire Moorlands and Staffordshire County Council are already using the system to improve two-tier service delivery. Partners went live initially with a limited range of service requests based on local priorities.

Partners are now pursuing a joint service development (data capture) project which will not only deliver 100 per cent e-enablement but will also guarantee a consistent approach across Staffordshire, making it easier for partners to accept service requests for each other.

The Staffordshire project is believed to represent the UK's most comprehensive local government implementation of a single CRM system. The partnership has been awarded beacon status.

Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership

The Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership, formed by Breckland District Council and Forest Heath District Council, is demonstrating a way forward for shared services in the revenues and benefits field.

This public-public partnership is governed by a joint committee that operates under a partnership agreement signed in August 2003. The partnership was implemented in stages over three years.

In year one -

- IT was harmonised with the unification of desktops and Revenues software.
- Processes and procedures were unified
- Training commenced to ensure consistency

In year two -

- The management of the two services was unified
- Electronic access provided to the customer through the Anglia revenues website
- An agreement signed between the two authorities to formalise the partnership and the joint committee introduced
- Joint procurement of third party services

In year three -

- The partnership brought together into single accommodation
- Single partnership budget introduced

A joint budget for the partnership was set for the first time in 2005/2006. This exercise demonstrated over 6% saving on the previous years budgets previously set individually by each authority. The original business plan estimated a staff saving of approximately £160,000 against the original separate staff budgets. In fact by the time that the shared structured was recommended and approved by the joint committee the savings seen were in the region of £170,000 between the two authorities.

In addition to these savings it has been possible to absorb changes to the benefit scheme such as pensioner tax credits and increased caseloads with no additional staff resources.

The majority of savings though have come from the economies of scale of sharing accommodation and IT as well as a rationalisation of management and the specialised roles that can be shared across the two authorities.

Breckland and Forest Heath have agreed to extend the partnership to include revenues services, and to encourage other partners to join them to increase the gains to be made.

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate praised the Anglia partnership highly in their January 2005 report and it influenced the findings of the Audit Commission's November 2005 study *The efficiency challenge - the administration costs of revenues and benefits*. The partnership has since been awarded beacon status.

The Anglia partnership has also influenced a major study involving some 46 authorities in the East of England which is due to report shortly. This work could lead to a partnership on a much wider scale across the region.

The study, which was funded by the East of England RCE, is likely to recommend the concentration of both contact centre and benefits processing activity combined with sub-regional models for walk-in customer service centres. Similar models are being explored for council tax and business rates.

Ashford Gateway

The Ashford Gateway was the brain child of Kent County Council Chief Executive Peter Gilroy. His vision to modernise the way in which public services are accessed is his ongoing passion.

“The Ashford Gateway is about creating a better experience for people and improving the quality of life by joining public services and making them more accessible in a friendly and attractive way.”

A project team led by Mid Kent Social Services set out to accomplish his vision and secured £1.1m from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Kent County Council.

A multi-agency Steering Group was set up in November 2003 to oversee and deliver the project. The Group was composed of officers from Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, Ashford PCT, Volunteer Bureau and Citizen’s Advice Bureau. Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart officially opened the Ashford Gateway in September 2005 and it opened its doors to the public in October.

Located in the heart of the Ashford shopping centre, the Gateway facility offers a wide range of services from computer-enabled learning, to housing advice, health promotion, access to voluntary organisations, County duty officers and free internet access. Architects have created a modern, flexible environment.

Key contributors to the services delivered through the Ashford Gateway are:

- Kent County Council
- Ashford Borough Council
- Ashford Primary Care Trust
- Ashford’s Future
- Discovery Centre
- Jobcentre Plus
- Connexions
- Volunteer Bureau
- Citizen’s Advice Bureau
- Hi Kent
- National Deaf Children’s Society

Skilled staff are on hand to help with general queries as well as specialists from partner organisations. PCT staff run surgeries from the centre, with plans for further integration, and greater integration with Jobcentre Plus is also being explored.

As well as all the public services available, customers can access the internet free of charge, make automated payments to Ashford Borough Council (e.g. Council Tax) from the payment point and book and hire a meeting room. There is a well-equipped business centre. A full calendar of exhibitions, advice sessions and training is also on offer.

For Kent County Council the Ashford Gateway is an important pilot which will inform the development of joint service centres across the county.

Kent County Council has an excellent four star CPA rating and Ashford Borough Council is currently “good”.

Southwark Health and Social Care

Southwark Health and Social Care is a partnership between Southwark Social Services and Southwark Primary Care Trust (PCT). It is a particularly good example of how powers in the Health Act 1999 can be used to integrate services.

To deliver improved services the Southwark partnership has –

- appointed a joint Strategic Director of Social Services and Chief Executive of the PCT – one of the first in the country (Knowsley is another).
- created a joint Senior Management Team with most posts having formal responsibilities on behalf of the council and the PCT.
- established a Joint Health and Social Care Board, drawn from the council's executive and the PCT's Board, to ensure proper governance of integrated services and pooled resources (using Health Act 1999 flexibilities).
- introduced integrated services, ensuring a single system of management for these functions and relevant staff and resources.
- agreed a partnership arrangement between health and social care (using a s.31 Health Act flexibilities) which will lead to a pool budget for all services delivered to older people in the community – including residential, nursing, intermediate, palliative and continuing care.
- implemented a single assessment system.
- introduced an integrated community equipment service across the Council and PCT.
- developed new services and pathways into care services such as stroke and the SLIPS service.

The partnership has delivered significantly improved outcomes for older people and added to their life chances and quality of life. For example, there has been a dramatic reduction in delays in transferring care from hospitals, reducing uncertainty and minimising time spent out of the home. The number of delayed discharges per 100,000 population in older people has fallen from 75 in 2003/04 to 10 currently, which is a band 5 performance.

Southwark has been awarded a three star rating (the best available) for its social services and beacon status for the partnership.