



A day in the life of Richard Crawley, PAS Programme Manager

Unless I'm heading off somewhere on a train, my day always starts with a 7-mile cycle into work from where I live near Crystal Palace. I "converted" to cycling about a decade ago, and wouldn't think of commuting any other way now.

10am

Today we have our monthly team meeting. We're only a small team of 11 and as a combination of home workers and people who are often working out and about it is essential to schedule a routine catch-up. We don't have a strong hierarchy, and the chair rotates around the team. We all share what we're up to, including the details of evaluation and other feedback. Today we discuss some of the things that the LGA are working on, some internal process stuff and our plans for 2014/15 and beyond!

12pm

Then it's time for some desk work. When PAS was first set-up in 2004 our original leader, Sarah Richards, described her work as "knitting" and I now know what she meant. There are almost no original thoughts or genuinely new approaches in local government planning – most of the job is preventing people reinventing the wheel and putting keen people in touch with each other. Today I'm reviewing a new part of a piece of work that probably traces its roots back five or six years, as follows:

- Many years ago we worked with PUSH to help them set up collaborative approaches to sharing and commissioning specialist planning services
- Fairly recently we helped Staffordshire oneplace to survey their member councils to establish whether they could do something similar. Key to this was a simple question that asked about whether councils wanted to be "buyers" or "sellers" – a market place needs both
- We worked with Local Partnerships on some events about delivery options and supported some councils looking at this in more depth
- Just last week I was with POS London who were about to do their own survey on something similar.

As a result of this knitting people and work together I quickly put together a comprehensive survey for the London authorities, using the benefit of our previous experience. We never intended to become some kind of national, trusted source of standards and surveys but it is starting to happen with increasing frequency. If you want to get your region to take part in the survey, get in touch and we'll hook you up. London's survey went live last week and so far three councils have already finished.

1pm

Over lunch I have a set of websites I peruse while chewing on the contents of my Tupperware. Of course I look at 'planning' and the 'portal' but I also read political and technical sites. Again, it's the knitting things together – for example you can [see my thoughts](#) on how a technical innovation called 'Sayit' might change the way that planning committees work. It also explains why Alice and I use [Kanban](#) when the pressure is really on.

As well as the future and the strategic, the job sometimes requires wrestling with the detail. After lunch I have another look at a proposal to change the 'Q' codes used for reporting planning applications to government. Even though no one has agreed to them yet, it makes sense for me to try to understand whether this is going to be good news or bad news for a project that we have in pilot at the moment called "the planning quality framework". It's the sort of thing that we use practitioners and the peer group for ultimately (most of our tools are genuinely "sector led"), but it helps to have a bit of a think about first.

2pm

Then into another meeting. Having said there's not much that's new it doesn't mean that we don't need to think and learn. Today's task is to try and unpack what it means to support councils and their need to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. We operate at scale, and have to be quite careful to ensure that we find the best way to engage councils. I'm not sure we get to the whole answer, but we agree some ideas about a survey and the importance of engaging councillors in allocations, as well as policy.

4pm

Lastly there is a certain amount of admin to be done before I can leave for the day. One of the important parts of my role is to ensure that the whole team deliver our work in a value-for-money and robust way. This means I help out on any tenders we're working on, as well as chasing orders and invoices through the system. PAS may be quite a defined programme but we still live inside a larger organisation with all the joy that corporate policies and procedures can deliver. After a chunk of time spent in front of Excel and our clunky corporate accounts system it's time to get back on the bike...