



Promoting shared services to increase efficiency and improve services

Sharing the provision or running of services between local authorities and with partners continues to be an effective efficiency solution. This is an approach that drives out cashable savings whilst offering an improved service to customers and RIEPs have a strong track record in helping authorities to collaborate successfully on shared services.

What is a shared service?

There are now a wide range of authorities across the regions that are feeling the benefits of both front line shared services offered to residents and back office shared services within the authorities' business functions. Front office shared services can include: One stop shops, contact centres, web portals and joining up of delivery on the likes of refuse collection across two or more authorities. In the back office a shared service approach may be taken to payroll and human resources functions, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems and shared management structures.

Why are shared services important?

- Shared services are centred around customer needs and the customer journey
- Shared services reduce duplicated spend on infrastructure across partners and offer economies of scale
- Shared services can be more streamlined and efficient to manage on a day to day basis
- Shared services can allow staff to work in a more effective and efficient way.

What do I need to know?

- Shared services must be designed around the customer needs
- Leader, lead members and chief executive ownership has to be secured at the outset
- Shared services are not the only way to transform services – what work has been undertaken to decide that this is the best way to transform the service?
- Staff must lead the transformation of the service from the outset.

Leading by example
Improvement and Efficiency South East has a well developed service and corporate transformation programme and proven track record on identifying the potential of shared services, developing and delivering them.

The Buckinghamshire Pathfinder is a two-tier pathfinder project where the RIEP is working with the County Council, 4 district councils and the fire and rescue service on shared support services. The support services being looked at include: human resources, financial services (excluding revenue and benefits), legal services, ICT, internal audit, facilities management, payroll. From an initial investment of £900,000 across partners the project is targeting initial savings of £8.5 million. The project is currently at the stage of creating a joint venture company. The RIEP has also supported Adur and Worthing District Councils to create a shared Chief Executive and management structure. From this starting point a number of shared services have been created including revenues and benefits and waste and refuse. Work is continuing and savings to date are £2.8 million.

Taking a sub-regional approach
The **East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership** has taken a sub-regional approach to how the local authorities in the region work together to deliver improvement and efficiency programmes. Across the sub-regions there are approximately 15 shared services projects currently underway including a number of these that are two-tier projects. In Derbyshire work on the establishment of a joint ICT service between North East Derbyshire and Derbyshire Dales District Councils is well underway with ICT infrastructure in place and the service now going live. Over a five year period the service is projecting savings of £715,000 for the authorities.

Working with fire and rescue services
YoHr Space (the Yorkshire and Humber RIEP) has funded a project to carry out a feasibility study into the practicalities of adopting a regional approach to critical areas of support services of the four Y&H Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA's).

This will involve joint commissioning and delivery of a number of complementary support services, falling under the general heading of technical services, for example vehicle procurement and maintenance, asset management, ICT, and uniforms and equipment.

It will include a detailed costing exercise and identification of service performance improvement compared with individual cost and service levels which the FRA's currently enjoy. The study will also consider the environmental impact on the four FRA's in terms of carbon footprint and also the future potential for wider partner involvement, particularly the other blue light services in the Y&H region.

Access to shared specialists
The **North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership's** Regional Timebank project is identifying potential efficiency savings and addressing skills shortages by sharing expertise in existing and emerging specialist areas such as construction, design and management regulations, asbestos, legionella control, risk management and flood planning in response to climate change adaptation. This will lead local authorities to provide key services in a collaborative way to ensure that each has shared access to the specialist services required on demand without carrying spare capacity.

Support available from the RIEPs

All nine RIEPs offer programmes of support to local authorities on service transformation and all have experience in working with local authorities on the development of shared services.