

Are You Looking at Shared Regulatory Services?

Help Sheet

The pressure on local authorities to collaborate is growing and is likely to increase. Councils will find it hard to make further savings without adopting more radical solutions. Integrating or sharing services locally can provide you with an opportunity to:

- ❖ Make savings;
- ❖ Redesign services to better meet the particular needs of an area;
- ❖ Provide a cheaper and better service; and
- ❖ Take a fresh approach and learn from the work done by others.

There are numerous benefits to sharing the delivery of services either within or across local authorities. Sharing services (through various methods) can play a significant role in helping your service area to deliver excellence whilst making efficiencies and improvements – and can help delivery within the current challenging financial climate. Once established shared services and effective partnerships will have the capacity to drive innovation and deliver further value to all parties.

Before you embark upon such a journey it is worth considering some of the key points contained in this help sheet. Your response to these may give you an indication as to the likelihood of your shared service initiative succeeding and lasting.

Drivers for embarking upon shared services are nearly always financial, but alongside these it is important to keep in mind the principles of better regulation and recognise other drivers. Hopefully some of the following will resonate. If not you may need to consider whether you are entering into a shared services arrangement for the right reasons.

Why are you looking to share services?

- ❖ Are you looking to improve efficiency and effectiveness within your LARS? Is your service area feeling under pressure as a result of the recession? Has your budget been reduced; have you been asked to make savings?
- ❖ Are you looking to build upon and strengthen existing partnership arrangements such as the work undertaken by regional coordinators/ groups?
- ❖ Are you looking to reduce burdens on business, reduce duplication, improve consistency and targeting of advice and deliver increased compliance?
- ❖ Are you having difficulty in recruiting/retaining qualified LARS staff? Are you looking to create access to specialist expertise?
- ❖ Are you struggling with issues around capacity and collaboration?
- ❖ Can you benefit from learning from others, or are you well placed to help others?

What is required to make shared services work?

- ❖ Is there a recognition and acceptance that there is a need for a partnership?
- ❖ Is there clarity about the objectives?
- ❖ Is there trust and honesty between all partners?
- ❖ Do you have “BUY IN” from all staff and members?
- ❖ Is there some flexibility in the approach being taken?
- ❖ Are you able to monitor and measure the work done by the partnership?
- ❖ Is there clear and robust partnership arrangements?
- ❖ Is there clarity about roles and responsibilities?
- ❖ Is there commitment and ownership with all partners?
- ❖ Have the outcomes been agreed and a method of measuring these?
- ❖ Will it deliver efficiency savings and benefits to your customers?
- ❖ Have you articulated and communicated the benefits to your stakeholders and members?
- ❖ Have you established a communications plan?
- ❖ Have you involved all the staff in developing the new service?
- ❖ Are you prepared to learn from others?

Sharing Services is often a longer term solution and 'quick wins' are often hard to identify. Understanding and thinking about some of the potential barriers which you might face will help you plan successfully. You may wish to consider:

- ❖ Have you involved elected members?
- ❖ Have you overcome any staff/member resistance to the partnership?
- ❖ Have you been honest in the evaluation of the benefits and have you communicated them?
- ❖ Have you identified any legal constraints which may hamper the partnership development?
- ❖ Are you clear on the costs of any IT harmonisation?
- ❖ Are you happy that the partnership is viable?
- ❖ Have the finance and accounting aspects of the partnership been agreed?
- ❖ Are there any current working practices which will be difficult to overcome?
- ❖ Have you managed any public concerns about the partnership?
- ❖ Have you considered the impact differing political views and agendas may have on the partnership?
- ❖ Have you been able to allay any concerns about the loss of local identity and the cultural differences which may exist within LARS?

There can be a multitude of reasons as to why partnerships have failed in the past. Have you considered putting the following in place?

- ❖ Clear communication channels
- ❖ Achievable, realistic goals
- ❖ Agreement on finance targets
- ❖ Clarity around the level of detail required
- ❖ A clear focus on outcomes
- ❖ The right person leading the change

Governance arrangements and the key points for consideration:

- ❖ Are you all clear what you want to get out of the partnership?
- ❖ How will success be measured?
- ❖ How will work be managed on a day to day basis and who controls it?
- ❖ How will decisions be made?
- ❖ Are you clear on the resource implications in delivering the partnership?
- ❖ Are all legal implications understood?
- ❖ Have you considered all alternatives?

Possible benefits:

- ❖ Will the partnership release resource to move service beyond inspection?
- ❖ Will it provide a single point of contact and consistency for customers?
- ❖ Will it increase the flexibility of staff to deliver local and national priorities?
- ❖ Will it allow cross sector projects to be developed?
- ❖ Will it improve intelligence sharing?
- ❖ Will multiple visits be reduced?
- ❖ Will it improve staff satisfaction by adding variety to their work?

Further information can be obtained from LBRO www.lbro.org.uk

Lisa Peplow
Policy Manager – Programme Delivery and Service Improvement
0121 226 4000
lisa.peplow@lbro.org.uk