



CORPORATE AND  
TRANSACTIONAL

## Shared IT Support across Lincolnshire

### Project background

This innovative project investigated the potential to integrate ICT support and possibly services across all partner authorities. Options from a loose informal pact through to a shared ICT service by two or more partners were considered; the HR, technical and financial aspects were also be scrutinised.

The Lincolnshire Public Sector Working Group (PSWG) was formed in 2001 with a remit to develop initiatives for joint delivery of services, and to provide multiple seamless delivery channels. The PSWG is made up of eight local authority partners as well as the Lincolnshire Police and the NHS Trusts.

The Partnership has been a great success and has consistently met and exceeded its aims and objectives of focusing resources to reduce duplication, sharing experience and information, inter-working through the use of standard technology and developing a clear strategic framework for information and internet services in Lincolnshire.

Improvement through efficiency



Centre of  
Excellence

East Midlands

[emce.gov.uk](http://emce.gov.uk)

## Authorities involved

- North Kesteven DC
- Boston BC
- South Kesteven DC
- South Holland DC
- East Lindsey DC
- Lincolnshire CC
- Lincoln City
- West Lindsey DC

## Objectives

Having already achieved a number of successes through partnership working, the team identified shared ICT support as a means of improving efficiency, optimising staff time, planning and responding to IT emergencies and making the most of the expertise available within the partner councils.

Setting up a system of shared ICT support was particularly important because all of the districts in Lincolnshire are fairly small and have limited resources available to them.

There are on average only six ICT support staff in each district, therefore losing one member of the team can have a considerable impact on an organisation, its staff and its customers. In this situation the council would have to replace the employee with expensive external resource, or face inefficiencies as a result of staff shortages. In addition, small teams are not well equipped for dealing with emergency situations.

The partnership team also recognised that at times councils would recruit external staff to deal with unmanageable workloads, or issues which the team did not have the skills to deal with, while at the same time an ICT team within a partner council had the capacity and expertise to deal with the situation.

A consultancy was commissioned to undertake an initial scoping study as a means of identifying potential options for improving the ICT support services through shared working.

They reviewed ICT provision across the partners through individual consultation and a group workshop. During the workshop, partners were asked to rank 20 potential options for shared ICT support in terms of how attractive the opportunity was overall to the member's organisation.

## Three options were identified as areas to be focused on:

- Disaster recovery
- Sharing skills expertise
- Sharing out of hours support.

In order to answer the need for disaster recovery planning, the project team are constructing a generic disaster recovery model that can be adapted for the different partners as required.

The team ensured that specialist knowledge and experience of disaster recovery planning was made available to all partners. They have prioritised activities for disaster recovery planning for example the provision of hardware, networks and systems. In order to meet their aims of sharing skills and expertise across partner organisations, a database was drawn up containing details of all employees working in IT support in partner organisations. If an organisation required particular capabilities they would know who to contact.

The outcomes of this shared services approach have been very positive. There are now working processes in place for sharing IT skills expertise. Risk has been minimised for all partner organisation and resources are better utilised which has resulted in both improved performance and efficiency gains.

## Secrets to their Success

The group believes that the success of the partnership and this project can be attributed to a couple of key factors. Firstly, in the early stages of the joint venture a partnership agreement was produced which ensured continued participation from partner organisations in the long term. They also highlight the importance of effective communication between partners and gaining top level commitment.

## Benefits realised

The Lincolnshire Public Sector Working group's most recent initiative to set up a system of shared ICT support has already resulted in some significant improvements.

- By sharing disaster recovery, IT skills expertise and out of hours support the provision of ICT has been significantly enhanced.
- It is now more efficient, less costly and employees' time is fully utilised.
- There is less reliance on contract and agency staff to deal with emergency situations or to make up for skills gaps which has resulted in considerable savings.
- Employee motivation has been enhanced due to the more challenging and varied nature of the work which gives staff greater opportunity to utilise their expertise.
- A culture of sharing has been created across partnership organisations and staff openly collaborate, share ideas and seek advice from partner authorities.

Cashable savings totalling £254k, non-cashable benefits totalling £1.371m and a qualitative improvement of 42% are forecast using the RSe Brent Return On Investment model over a period of 5 years from commencement of this project.

## Role of the EMCE

The East Midlands Centre of Excellence (EMCE) provided a grant allocation of £90k to fund this project, support was also provided by Julie Slatter, the EMCE's Assistant Director who specialises in the adoption and development of partnership working in the region.

### Contact

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