

East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership



East Midlands
Improvement and
Efficiency Partnership

Business Improvement Training - a BIT of a success story! ▼

East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership Case Studies

The East Midlands Improvement & Efficiency Partnership is committed to celebrating the successful, innovative and imaginative project work that exists in the East Midlands region.

The EM IEP Support Team publish case studies showing how East Midlands councils are improving services, and delivering significant improvements and efficiencies.

The case studies are intended to inspire councils in the region, and indeed nationally, to transform services and benefit from the processes developed by those councils that have pioneered the way forward.

Introduction ▼

An innovative training approach has enabled authorities in the East Midlands to make lasting improvements to their services whilst saving money and building internal capability.

Over 250 officers from local authorities across the region have completed training in Business Improvement Techniques (BIT), identifying £900k of potential savings. Unusually, the training mimics a rapid improvement project, so that changes are implemented and services are improved during the training course.

Furthermore, the training is fully funded so there is no cost to participating authorities. Once officers are trained they're able to apply their new skills to other processes, developing a culture of continuous improvement throughout the authority and making a real difference to the services that customers receive.

The Issue ▾

Local authorities are under significant pressure to improve the services they deliver to customers whilst also making financial savings.

To address these priorities most authorities are undertaking corporate transformation projects, relying upon relatively small teams of transformation experts and consultants to work with officers and implement changes. Whilst this

approach can be effective, it is often criticised for not engaging officers sufficiently and stifling innovation at the front line. Officers can end up feeling like the changes are being imposed upon them, and that they aren't responsible for making improvements.

Services to customers often suffer as a result.

The Solution ▾

To help overcome this issue, more and more authorities are taking advantage of fully-funded training in Business Improvement Techniques. By training officers within departments, those who deliver services every day and who understand the detail of the business process, there is a greater sense of ownership for

improvements and the customer experience. The officers develop the skills required to analyse and re-engineer business processes, removing waste steps and implementing changes which really make a difference to customers, as well as saving money for the authority.

The training ▾

Officers work together in a team of 10 to carry out a short, 'real-world' improvement project within their own authority, bringing tangible organisational benefits as well as personal skill development. The training is carried out entirely in the workplace, with six days of training spread over 10-12 weeks. This allows officers to pilot and implement changes during the training course.

This is a 'bottom-up' approach to business process improvement and re-engineering, driven by the people who carry out the process every day. The training equips and encourages officers to make measurable, sustainable improvements to their own processes, in order to achieve better business performance, increased efficiency and greater customer satisfaction. It fosters a culture of continuous improvement as well



as team-working and helps to bring about a more effective work environment.

A particular advantage of the training is that authorities and officers can decide which process to focus upon and improve. They may choose a process that has been causing concern, or an entirely new process that involves a local partner. The processes selected for re-engineering so far include waste, procurement, revenue collection, planning, recruitment, printing, postal services and environmental health.

The training has proven to be popular, with officers from

fourteen authorities having been trained to date: Nottingham City Council, Derbyshire County Council, Northamptonshire Police, Wellingborough BC, East Northamptonshire DC, Mansfield DC, Newark & Sherwood DC, North West Leicestershire DC, Daventry DC, Broxtowe BC, North Kesteven DC, Ashfield DC, Amber Valley BC and Bolsover DC.

The training has been delivered by NA Consultants, a national training, development and productivity organisation, working in partnership with a number of further education colleges.

The outcomes ▾

The outcomes of the training have been extremely positive:

- Over 250 officers from across the region have been trained in Business Improvement Techniques, forming a significant body of skilled experts.
- Participants have identified c £900k of savings as part of the training (£3,600 per participant), as well as making significant improvements to the services that customers receive.
- The training is fully-funded by the LSC (Learning & Skills Council), so there has been no cost to authorities.
- All participants have successfully

gained a nationally-recognised qualification, an NVQ level 2 in Business Improvement Techniques.

- The training has helped to build capacity and capability within authorities, enabling officers to improve processes and services themselves, without needing support from costly consultancies.

In addition, the training has helped to bring officers together into cross-functional teams, motivating them and increasing staff retention. Officers have really benefited from the training, judging by some of the feedback received:

- “We are now equipped to create change”

- “An enjoyable learning process”
- “The trainers were great, really helpful”
- “We’ve already saved a lot of time and money”

More broadly, the training has resulted in many small scale

improvement projects being initiated within authorities. Each of these projects will go on to refine processes, saving money and improving services for customers.

Examples from authorities ▼

In one of their training groups, Broxtowe Borough Council focused upon the staff recruitment process, from a vacancy being identified to a new member of staff being appointed. Officers applied the techniques they were taught to analyse the existing process and remove unnecessary steps. As a result of the training they identified over £8k of savings, released 7 weeks of staff time and reduced the recruitment process for applicants by 10 days.

North Kesteven District Council used the training to examine the process for identifying and billing new properties. A number of improvements were made, including developing a new electronic report of planning decisions which was 3 pages long instead of 100. The team also developed an action plan to implement further improvements

and secured management support for an information sharing project

Once the training course has finished, authorities are left with a group of motivated, qualified officers who can deliver real improvements. Following successful changes to postal processes, North West Leicestershire District Council asked the training group to form a virtual Business Improvement team, which now acts as a sounding board for new proposals. The team represent a range of different service areas and grades, and help to assess which proposals should be taken forward, advising the corporate management team.

Case studies from individual authorities are available on the EM IEP website: www.eastmidlandsiep.gov.uk

Key Lessons ▾

The training has helped to show that many of the best ideas for improving a process come from those who carry out the process every day. By giving these officers training in specific techniques, services can be significantly improved and savings can be made. Furthermore, the trained officers will act as advocates for further improvements, encouraging colleagues to look for other ways to change services for the better. Gradually a culture of improvement can be developed which will bring real benefits to customers.

The training also highlighted that relatively few local authorities are taking advantage of the wide range of fully-funded NVQs that are available. Business Improvement Techniques is just one of the many NVQs on offer, delivered by professional training organisations all over the East Midlands. Regional skills brokers from the Train to Gain service can help authorities find the kind of training and provider that is appropriate – visit www.traintogain.gov.uk to find out more.

Role of EM IEP ▾

The EM IEP has helped to promote this training to authorities, encouraging them to take advantage of the training and providing support before, during and after the course.

The training is part of a wider ‘Business Transformation’ programme, which aims to build

the region’s capacity to undertake business transformation projects, helping authorities to improve services for customers and realise cashable efficiency savings. If you would like to find out more about the training or are interested in the wider programme of support, please contact Merlin Tinker.

Notes ▾

Contacts and Further information ▾

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