



CORPORATE AND TRANSACTIONAL

## EM LawShare



### Summary

EM LawShare was initiated following a successful partnership arrangement between two legal firms and Nottinghamshire County Council's in-house Legal Services Team.

Prior to re-tendering, Jayne Francis, Assistant Head of Legal Services (Practice Manager), discovered that there was considerable interest from neighbouring authorities to work collaboratively in tendering for legal support and set about creating a partnership.

The primary aim of the EM LawShare partnership was to ensure that participating authorities would receive a considerable reduction in the hourly rate charged by private sector firms.

### Quote

***“This is a model of co-operation between large and small councils in the East Midlands region to provide a more cost effective and timely legal service. This legal partnership should generate significant service improvements to all councils within the region, particularly small councils with scarce resources at their disposal”***

Chris Allison,  
Regional Director,  
East Midlands  
Centre of Excellence

Improvement through efficiency



Centre of  
Excellence

East Midlands

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

## Role of RCE

The East Midlands Centre of Excellence (EMCE) has supported the creation of EM LawShare through the provision of grant aid and the development of a secure website. Julie Slatter, EMCE Assistant Director for Partnerships is a member of a working group supporting the development of EM LawShare.

## Project background

Under the Gershon efficiency agenda legal teams across the East Midlands are challenged to reduce the hourly rate charged by private sector firms, typically £270 per hour. An estimated £3m per annum of legal work was outsourced by the partnership, which consists of 19 authorities including Police and Fire. There was also a need to reduce training support costs for in-house legal teams, a typical daily cost of £400 per person.

## Objectives

EM LawShare is open to all East Midlands Local Authorities to ensure that maximum volume discounts are achieved on the hourly rate charged by the four external firms, selected through the tendering process for the partnership.

A number of additional benefits were sought by the partnership:

- Timely support from contracted partners
- Access to legal opinions and professional training
- Reduced cost of obtaining Counsel Opinions via partners sharing data and external research facilities
- Creation of a secure web based depository for the sharing of legal opinions and other legal intellectual property, thus reducing research activity
- Increased productivity through reduced duplication
- Opportunities to establish mini centres of legal specialisation
- Reduction in training costs, including accommodation/conference facilities for training events.

## Benefits achieved

The EM LawShare contract has achieved a substantial reduction in the hourly rate charged by the four firms selected for the partnership.

The contract also includes provision for the external partners to provide for the training needs of all of the authority's legal teams, for a significantly reduced fee.

The partnership has facilitated the sharing of best practice amongst authorities through a small representative working group. The development and use of the secure website will enable partners to access and share resources.

The cost-benefit analysis, completed jointly by the EMCE and representatives of the local authorities within the partnership, indicates that £5m cashable and non-cashable savings are anticipated over the duration of the partnership contract.

## Critical success factors

It is essential that participating authorities use the arrangements which have been set up. If they do not use the arrangements then the partnership will not be able to maximise the volume discounts and the selected firms will not be as willing to provide the "added value" aspects of the arrangements.

There are likely to be issues in administering such a large project and ensuring that the website is up to date. Nottinghamshire County Council is currently responsible for providing this resource. In future, LawShare partners may be charged an administration fee to cover this service.

The project management team propose to keep the current system in place for 6 months before assessing the administrative burden. If an administration charge is necessary then it would be based on usage rather than the size of an authority to avoid the risk of smaller authorities withdrawing from the arrangement.

## Risks

If an authority refuses or fails to pay for services provided by the partner firms then fellow partnership members are jointly and severally liable. However, this issue has been dealt with in the contract. There was also a risk that the firms chosen might fall out amongst themselves and try vying for work directly with authorities, this has also been dealt with in the contract.

## Transferability

The membership of the partnership are enthusiastic about the benefits that have already been achieved and the added value of extending the availability of the partnership across all 46 East Midlands authorities. The lead officers of this project will transfer to other interested authorities their experiences so that learning can be shared across the English regions.



Jayne Francis, Assistant Head of Legal Services (Practice Manager) from the lead authority, Nottinghamshire County Council states that

*“to successfully transfer this project to other English regions will require the commitment of someone to take the lead on behalf of the partnership, in conjunction with a very small working group. Experience from the EM LawShare partnership shows that it would have been impossible to have been successful in delivering the benefits of this project, if every time we needed to make a decision we had to go back to the whole partnership.”*

## Contact

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