

Efficiency News

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Welcome to the eleventh edition of *Efficiency News*, published by the Communities and Local Government Modernisation and Efficiency Division and National Procurement Forum in partnership with PricewaterhouseCoopers.

To receive a copy of Efficiency News, please e-mail:

med@communities.gsi.gov.uk

If you have any comments or wish to submit content to this newsletter, please e-mail: med@communities.gsi.gov.uk

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Modernisation and Efficiency Division, the Forum, Communities and Local Government or Government ministers

Efficiency Champion's Notebook

National Efficiency Champion and Chief Executive of the London Borough of Lewisham, Barry Quirk, examines the continuing role of productivity in the evolving efficiency agenda.

As expected, the efficiency agenda is evolving. From March 2008, local government will be required to meet a tougher 3 per cent annual efficiency target, solely through the achievement of cashable gains.

This requirement will encourage more far-reaching cost reduction strategies. And the focus on cashable gains presents a renewed challenge to find innovative methods of realising efficiencies in terms of lowering the cost base. However, this new emphasis should not result in the productivity agenda being laid to rest.

Over the past two years authorities have been required to deliver at least one-half of all efficiencies through cashable gains. In 2005/06, almost three-quarters of local government efficiencies were cashable. Whilst achieving 100 per cent cashable efficiency gains is certainly a demanding test, continuing to improve productivity is equally as challenging and important. And although there may no longer be an official target for non-cashable efficiencies this is not a "get out of jail" card for councils.

It is vital that productivity remains at the heart of the new efficiency regime. Concentrating all efforts on the achievement of cashable efficiencies cannot result in managers drifting away from the productivity issue.

Improving productivity is certainly not an easy task, it is a difficult agenda, but management of the costs of service supply goes hand in hand with management of service demand. There is little point in reducing the cost of supplying a service if decreasing numbers of people are using or valuing the service. But help is at hand - managers are not alone, support is widely available for councils on methods to increase productivity, through the Regional Centres of Excellence, the IDeA and colleagues across the sector. The local government white paper is itself a valuable resource offering a range of ideas.

A productive local government sector is crucial to the overall productivity of both local and national economy. The drive for higher productivity remains a necessary condition for ensuring that local government services not only deliver higher value to citizens but are more highly valued by citizens.

The Well Managed Organisation

With absence levels in local government continuing to fall, the Health and Safety Executive has issued guidance designed to help continue the trend.

Local government has again performed well in delivering and sustaining improvements in tackling attendance management. The latest Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) information for 2005/6 shows that the overall average number of days lost per employee remains unchanged at 9.6 days,

thereby indicating that the previous year's overall average half-day-per-employee improvement has been sustained across the local authority community.

However, it is essential to keep up the momentum and local authorities looking for more information on tackling attendance management may be interested to know that the Health and Safety Executive have recently published a suite of documents under the heading of "The Well Managed Organisation" (access via link at foot of page).

In the review of "Managing Sickness Absence in the Public Sector," the Ministerial Task Force for Health, Safety and Productivity invited the Work Foundation to undertake a joint project with HSE to develop a profile for the "Well Managed Organisation". Its objective was to promote board level leadership and to ensure that the public sector was in a position to lead by example on attendance management, health and well-being in the modern workplace. Top level leadership remains a key factor in making sure that these issues are addressed.

HSE worked closely with the Work Foundation on this project and an advisory group was established, with members drawn from Task Force departments and trade unions, to advise on the approach. The Work Foundation, HSE and the advisory group identified four elements to the strategy:

- Monitoring, measuring and understanding;
- Managing sickness absence when it happens;
- Tackling the underlying causes of absence; and
- A culture that encourages attendance.

To reflect these objectives the Work Foundation produced a suite of three products aimed at different levels of the management chain:

- **Guidelines for Boards.** These are aimed at Chief Executives and board members. They are intended to support boards as they address sickness absence and promote a healthy workplace. They are designed to be part of a "whole systems" approach that: (a) links top level commitment to operational delivery; (b) tackles problems that are organisational rather than individual; and (c) involves employees and their representatives;
- **Guidelines for HR Directors and Senior Managers.** These supplement the guidelines for boards. They provide a framework for considering the reduction of absence and the promotion of healthy attendance and sources of further expertise;
- **Diagnostic Tools for Handling Sickness Absence.** This toolkit supplements the guidance for boards and HR directors. It is aimed at practitioners and will help them to: (a) identify management skills and training needs; (b) assess underlying causes of absence, especially where they might be improved through better work organisation and job design; and (c) implement best practice in engaging the workforce. It includes pointers to further sources of help and advice.

You can access this guidance on the [HSE website](#)

If you would like further information, please contact Mark Dempsey at mark.dempsey@hse.gsi.gov.uk

Departmental Focus – Efficiencies in Environmental Services

The South East Centre of Excellence (SECE) is lead centre for the environmental services workstream. For the past year the main focus has been on waste management, from which the SECE spend analysis shows that waste is one of the top five individual spends in local authorities.

How waste management services are procured

Local authorities have responsibility for managing municipal waste (collecting, recycling, treating and disposing of the waste in a legal manner), which is funded by council tax receipts. There are over 400 local authority bodies in England that handle waste and these include:

- 239 waste collection authorities (WCAs), typically district councils, who have a statutory responsibility for the collection of municipal waste;
- 21 waste disposal authorities (WDAs), typically county councils, who are responsible for treating and disposing municipal waste from their constituent WCAs; and
- 137 unitary authorities (UAs), who are responsible for the collection and subsequent treatment and disposal of municipal waste.

Current support to Local Government

Local authorities are bombarded with a fragmented and bid based support mechanism. For example, DEFRA's Waste Implementation Programme (WIP) is the main government sponsor of waste and local authority support. This team liaises with the strategy and policy teams within DEFRA, whilst having to work with DCLG on planning issues and the Environment Agency (EA) on standards and monitoring. Amongst other bodies that contribute to the policy framework are the Local Government Association (LGA), Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Office of Government Commerce, Regional Development Agencies, Regional Assemblies and Government Offices and HM Treasury. Under these conditions it is very difficult to understand and keep up with what is happening in the world of waste. It is partly for this reason that SECE implemented the Waste Information Network (WIN).

The Waste Information Network (WIN)

The Waste Information Network (WIN) has been developed by SECE as an online support tool for local authorities and provides up-to-date information on all aspects of municipal waste management. WIN makes waste information more easily accessible by signposting users to the relevant place and is designed to be the first port of call for local authority waste/procurement/planning/sustainability officers for any waste/resource management issue.

How will WIN benefit an Authority?

WIN provides:

- A searchable Document Library on waste and resource management topics, including consultation reports (see below);
- A members' support tool, for officers and elected members;
- A guide and link to toolkits that reduce cost to local authorities;
- A mechanism for harmonising procurement support including best practice and "how to procure";

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- A calculation for rating efficiencies & gaining cashable benefits under Annual Efficiency statements (AES);
 - A contact database that will enable officers and members to find the "experts" and all authorities;
 - A database of contracts and contract documentation to enable targeted support and possibilities of joint working, whilst avoiding "re-inventing the wheel";
 - A guide on how to use E-sourcing in waste procurement; and
 - A resource to answer any queries and questions.

WIN has been developed to save officer time and share good practice which will help local authorities gain from the experience of other authorities, ensuring that the Environmental Services Efficiency target of £299 million by 2007 is achieved. The return on investment for WIN is estimated to be £24 million over a five year period.

The site's document library consists of 300 peer reviewed reports which include government guidance on improving systems, local authority consultancy reports and case studies featuring authorities that have made significant improvements in terms of meeting their targets.

The site is a portal that rationalizes information which already exists and provides an easy to navigate gateway to useful links; for example, toolkits which have been produced to help local authorities to increase recycling have been summarized and made available to download.

WIN now has nearly 300 registered local authority users since its launch in June 2006 and each month is getting around 50,000 hits. Feedback from users has been very positive and there are endless examples of WIN proving to improve knowledge within local government. WIN has revolutionised knowledge transfer between local authorities and the cost savings brought about by the reduced need to commission consultants to carry out work can be used more productively to improve services.

How can I use WIN?

To register to use WIN please visit the [Waste Information Network website](#). You must register to access the site and it is free.

For further information please contact:

David Greenfield, Assistant Director –Waste david.greenfield@sece.gov.uk tel 07711930988 or
Christine Batty, WIN Project Manager, Christine.batty@sece.gov.uk tel 07711930989

Policy Focus – Productive Time – National Process Improvement Project (NPIP)

Communities and Local Government's National Process Improvement Project is set to play a crucial role in the delivery of the efficiency commitments outlined in the Local Government White Paper. Further details of the Project are explored below.

As you will no doubt be aware, Communities and Local Government recently published The Local Government White Paper. Efficiency and the transformation of local services was a key feature of

this; and central to efficiency was the commitment to support the greater use of Business Process Improvement (BPI) techniques in order to improve service delivery.

BPI is fundamental to improving productive time, and we very much hope that the focus it has received in the White Paper is something that local authorities will welcome, given that it has been found that approximately 90% of councils anticipate a greater role for BPI methods in delivering more ambitious change in the future.

One way in which Communities and Local Government are taking forward this commitment is through the National Process Improvement Project (NPIP). This project will develop, identify and document "good practice" tools and techniques used to improve business processes, in order to enable other Local Authorities wishing to initiate such activity to learn from this. It is hoped that the materials will form part of a wider learning resource which can be used with confidence by others.

NPIP builds on work already started by local authorities in the North West who last year produced some 260 process activity maps covering each council tier. This resulted in achieving – for the first time – a complete set of agreed descriptions for what local authorities do in contributing to the business of delivering local public services.

The next stage of work which we are now taking forward involves 8 pilot Local Authorities taking forward a range of BPI projects in approximately 8 different service areas, such as Adult Social Care, Revenues and Benefits and Waste Management. This work will further develop the Local Government Business Process Architecture to include local service delivery activity costs. The intention is to develop a consistent methodology for costing "as is" and "to be" process activity costs. The projects are wide ranging from some looking at re-engineering to share services with other local authorities and other agencies right through to streamlining work practices and moves to home working and office space rationalisation. It is hoped that these projects will provide real evidence in order to reveal the true and accurate potential for further efficiency gains through business process improvement.

The ultimate objective of this work is to create a practical service delivery toolkit for the wider local government community to use in order to streamline and modernise local service delivery.

Sue Reid, Deputy Director of the Local Government Modernisation and Efficiency team at DCLG, wrote to Local Authority Chief Executives and the 9 Directors of the Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs) on 31 May to ensure that all councils had early access to the developing process improvement toolkit. Many local authorities responded to this and expressed an interest in taking part in further work to establish consistent "good practice" methods for process costing. We have therefore established a Business Process Improvement expert User Advisory Group, in order to hear your views and ideas, and learn from your experiences. This group met for the first time on 17th November 2006, and it proved to be a lively and productive discussion. The next meeting is due to take place on 15th February 2007.

In addition to this project, DCLG, in conjunction with the London Centre of Excellence have recently published a case study booklet of ten business process improvement exemplar initiatives from within local government. These were launched at two seminars recently held by DCLG, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive and Local Government Employers, for Council Leaders and Chief Executives on tackling attendance management and efficiency, under the banner of the Ministerial Taskforce on Health, Safety and Productivity. We very much hope that this booklet will also prove to

be of use to you, and will assist you in streamlining the way you work so that ultimately you will be able to deliver first class public services, which is the highest priority for us all.

There is no doubt that BPI is central to driving continuous process productivity improvement. If you would be interested in taking part in NPIP, or would like further information, please contact Colin Whitehouse, NPIP Project Manager, on 020 7944 2997 or colin.whitehouse@communities.gsi.gov.uk, or Nicky Jackman, NPIP Project Sponsor, on 020 7944 4515 or nicky.jackman@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Update from the Regional Centres of Excellence

Run by local government for local government, the Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs) play an essential role in transforming council services. With a growing reputation for achievement and success, the RCEs are helping councils up and down the country to secure millions of pounds in efficiencies that can be re-invested in front line services.

National news

Chief Executives' Task Force annual report calls on councils to embrace new ways of providing services

The Chief Executives' Task Force, the body that oversees the work of the nine Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs), has published its 2005/06 annual report. Entitled 'Local government: a more efficient public service', the report provides an analysis of local government's track record on efficiency and a summary of the performance of the RCEs. It sets out the challenges facing the local government community as the efficiency and improvement agenda is about to intensify.

It concludes that the pace of transformation must quicken and its reach widen to meet future fiscal targets and the expectations of citizens. It calls for greater use of business process improvement techniques, more collaboration across authorities, an acceleration of shared services and smarter procurement to ensure local government remains on track.

Rob Sykes, Chair of the Chief Executives' Task Force, said, "Local authorities have made an impressive start to meeting their efficiency targets while the RCEs have made huge strides in performance and I welcome the support given to them by Communities and Local Government. Efficiency is a recurring theme throughout the recently published White Paper. Councils must embrace new ways of providing essential services and the RCEs must prove that by responding to the needs of local authorities they are indispensable change agents for local government efficiency."

Copies of the booklet are available from all Regional Centres of Excellence and at www.rcoe.gov.uk

Efficiency and the White Paper: an analysis

Efficiency is a major theme in the White Paper, whether expressed explicitly or implicitly, that underpins large parts of its rationale, analysis and direction. It acknowledges that efficiency and

service improvement are two sides of the same coin; that local services can be transformed by a variety of measures, not all of them badged 'efficiency'.

It also recognises that efficiency must be embedded within other policy areas of our public services. For example, the White Paper places an emphasis on partnership working. It recognises that the silo approach to improvement and efficiency is no longer valid in today's context and states that local government needs to 'overcome confusion, duplication and inefficiency'.

Hence, it calls for much more working across organisational and geographical boundaries and the proposals for Multi Area Agreements, Local Area Agreements and stronger Local Strategic Partnerships will be the vehicles for embedding efficiency measures and setting targets within future partnership working. It also sets out proposals for leaders who have the ability to bring together local partners to improve services and advocates the duty for named partners to collaborate. In terms of governance, those who make bids for unitary status will argue that it will overcome duplication and inefficiency. Where the case is not made for unitary status, the White Paper expects to see greater co-operation between the tiers of local government to increase efficiency and deliver better outcomes.

Whether its place shaping, stronger city regions or measuring efficiency under the proposed Comprehensive Area Assessment, the efficient use of public money is a recurring theme in the White Paper.

Efficiency has its own chapter. It calls for a quicker rate of change and more innovation by local authorities. It places significant emphasis on business process improvement as a means of generating efficiency gain as well as investment in ICT, collaboration, partnership working and shared services, whether front or back office.

The White Paper is generous in acknowledging the progress made by local government. But to deliver transformed services in ways that meet forthcoming financial challenges, it couldn't be any plainer. Councils will need to challenge traditional methods of structure and delivery, they must root out waste and work with other public bodies to share assets, systems, data, skills and knowledge more effectively.

Councils set to share in a £20 million efficiency drive

Local authorities could share in a multi-million pound efficiency drive by migrating their postal services spending onto one of two framework contracts recommended by the first On the Money guide published by the Regional Centres of Excellence National Procurement Programme (NPP).

Publication of the guide follows an analysis of postal services by the RCEs which found that at least £20 million in cashable savings could be realised by authorities migrating onto new, more advantageous pan-sector contracts. County councils could save an average of £200,000, unitaries £100,000 and district councils around £30,000.

The NPP aims to help councils reduce their expenditure on commodities, goods and services and to invest the savings in protecting and improving front-line services. The On the Money guides will set out the best deals around and a step-by-step process for making the transition onto those deals as straightforward as possible. Further On the Money guides will be published covering other key markets over the coming months.

For more information about the postal services On the Money guide, please contact one of the nine RCEs (details at the end of the newsletter).

Round up from the Regional Centres

Adult Social Care

A consortium is being developed to improve the commissioning of services for adults and young people with autism living in the North East. The project aims to establish a partnership between the statutory commissioning agencies – the primary care trusts, local authorities, the Learning and Skills Council and the National Autistic Society.

The **North East** Centre of Excellence has awarded funding to the project to provide a Head of Consortium, plus support, to develop commissioning and delivery frameworks for the range of services needed for adults with autism spectrum disorders. The framework will inform local commissioning strategies and business plans for all the statutory bodies involved in the project. It is expected that the Head of Consortium will take up post early in 2007.

The **South West** Centre of Excellence has received approval from the LIFT South West Management Board to release £250,000 to help double the capacity and accelerate the roll out of the Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) Adult Service review programme across the region. The CSED programme has just completed a national pilot of over 40 authorities which found that efficiency gains of between 5% and 10% can be generated by increasing process efficiency and reducing waste. Across the South West the potential for gains is anything between £12.5 million and £25 million a year.

Children's Services

An outline strategic action plan has been prepared by the National Steering Group and key actions are included in a draft work programme. The main areas focus primarily on looked after children and include:

- Databases – to identify national best practice
- Regional commissioning
- Identifying good and/or transferable procurement practices
- Cross-over areas with adult services and health

It is expected that a number of initiatives coming through in the first part of 2007 will include publishing best practice guides which will be supported by events and seminars for practitioners.

The **North East** Centre of Excellence has allocated funding to support the work of the Regional Commissioning Unit for Children's Services. Five key areas have now been identified on which to focus in the first year:

- Commissioning for specialist needs in areas of identified short-fall
- Review of special educational needs provision in the region
- Review of contracting methods and procedural/legislative guidance
- Audit of children with complex healthcare needs
- Comparative study of unit costs for local authority and independent services

Commodities, goods and services

Postal services pilot projects carried out across Norfolk and Suffolk and funded by the **East of England** Centre of Excellence realised efficiency gains of £578,000 a year for the Norfolk area and £414,000 a year for the Suffolk area. Agreement has now been reached to roll out the initiative to all remaining local authorities in the region to provide them with an informed choice about efficiency opportunities and quantifiable savings by switching suppliers.

The **London** Centre of Excellence hosted a workshop to launch the publication of the pan-London strategy 'Leveraging ICT Expenditure' and to set out plans for a London-wide ICT hardware e-auction. The event was also supported by the London NHS which is keen to join forces and collaborate. Delegates agreed to proceed with a joint ICT hardware e-auction with the London NHS and Essex authorities, which is scheduled to take place in April 2007. A project board has been established and a project manager is being appointed.

Public sector organisations in the South West, West Midlands and South East are set to realise almost £14m in cashable savings by 2010 as a result of e-auctions held in the South West. Recent auctions supported by the South West Centre of Excellence for agency staff, wheeled bins, stationery and protective gloves have involved 28 local authorities as well as six NHS organisations and one police authority.

- After undertaking a collaborative e-tender and e-auction process for agency staff Wiltshire County Council, Bath and North East Somerset Unitary Authority and the four Wiltshire District Councils could achieve savings of up to £6 million over three years.
- A wheeled bins and associated services e-auction led by East Devon District Council for 18 local authorities could result in savings of £2.4m over four years.
- An e-auction for protective gloves involving two South West local authorities, six NHS organisations and a police authority is likely to result in savings of more than £2m over four years.
- Gloucester City Council held an e-auction for printer consumables, paper and other stationery on behalf of nine South West authorities. Anticipated savings of £3.5m over three years could be achieved as a result of the three consolidated contracts agreed.

All of these auctions have established frameworks agreements which are available for other public sector organisations to take advantage of. The Centre has a programme of more auctions planned for 2007 including personal protective equipment, printed materials, sheds/fencing, vehicle fuel, furniture and road salt.

In the **West Midlands**, the Centre of Excellence is placing an emphasis on the following commodity areas in line with the National Procurement Programme:

- Postal services where savings of up to 30% are anticipated
- Home to school transport on which another 30% savings are expected
- Insurance services with estimated savings of 10%

As a result, networking groups have been established and benchmarking activity is being undertaken in all areas. This developing programme of work will feed into the region's ambitious plans to implement a regional procurement hub in early 2007.

Following the successful launch of the toolkit for procuring temporary and agency staff which has been produced by the London Borough of Havering and funded by the **London** Centre of Excellence, the Agency Staff Efficiency Savings Project has moved into its second phase. A key deliverable is the development of an Electronic Knowledge Exchange (EKE) to share information about the temporary workforce between London boroughs. This will support better workforce planning and benchmarking of rates paid.

A user group has been formed to agree the system's functionality, the information that will be captured and how it will be used. A key task is to identify job categories to enable boroughs to compare spend, the number of hours worked etc.

The **East Midlands** Centre of Excellence is funding a number of projects improve procurement across the region:

- Working with the Regional Procurement Steering Group, the Centre is facilitating the development of a regional procurement strategy and work plan.
- The Centre is supporting five sub-regional procurement forums to develop procurement strategies and work plans by facilitating five workshops during December.
- Helm has been commissioned to publish a guide 'Procurement: A Model for Success' to provide advice on creating corporate procurement teams in local authorities.

The **South East** Centre of Excellence has launched the South East Business Portal to provide simple and transparent access to best value contracts for authorities in the region. The portal is a one-stop-shop for authorities and suppliers to gain access to a contracts database, a new business opportunities database and procurement best practice guidance. It brings savings to authorities by providing access to more favourable contract arrangements and enabling more efficient procurement processes.

Twenty eight boroughs attended the London-wide launch of the Partnerships in Parking initiative, a project funded by the **London** Centre of Excellence. PiP seeks to harmonise car parking practices across London and generate significant efficiency gains. The launch focused on two initial projects - parking enforcement stationery and on street equipment. Representatives heard how by joining the partnership and participating in the procurements, local authorities can deliver a better, more consistent service to their residents and visitors and generate significant financial savings through grouped procurements.

Also in **London**, implementation on the Contracts Register Service is progressing well with over 20 boroughs now active and the remainder seeking to be active within a matter of weeks. Over 1,000 London contracts are now loaded which will allow boroughs to collaborate on an unparalleled scale by sharing information and aligning major contracts.

Construction

Three East Midlands construction companies are joining forces with Nottinghamshire County Council in a new strategic alliance, worth around £120 million, to deliver the authority's capital building works programme until 2010. This four year framework agreement, which is available to all local authorities in the region, includes a range of projects such as schools, libraries and offices with individual values over £350,000. The **East Midlands** Centre of Excellence has encouraged the development of framework agreements within the region for the efficient procurement of social housing, property and

highways construction projects. This is the second such framework agreement to receive support from the Centre in the past six months.

The feasibility of a regional Local Education Partnership to manage and deliver the Building Schools for the Future programme in the East Midlands is being progressed. The outline proposal being tested is to use a new local authority company, SCAPE Building Systems Ltd, which has been established with support from the **East Midlands** Centre of Excellence, to procure design and build construction projects for its constituent local authorities. The feasibility study will be completed by April 2007.

Corporate and transactional services

The **West Midlands** Centre of Excellence is funding a Business Process Review project which continues to receive strong support from the region's authorities and Fire and Rescue colleagues. Following the first meeting of the steering group, a combined programme of activities has now been drawn up. In return for an £800,000 investment, a target of £2.4 million a year in efficiency gains for the first three years has been set.

While in the **East Midlands**, the Centre of Excellence is starting to pilot business improvement techniques training in the region. Three potential pilots have been identified in authorities where the initiative will add value to projects already sponsored by the Centre.

The White Paper is promoting the use of BPR as a way of improving service delivery and achieving efficiency gains.

The **Yorkshire and the Humber** Centre of Excellence, as the national lead on corporate and transactional services, is a member of the recently established National Electronic Payments Steering Group which aims to produce a toolkit for local authorities setting out ways to increase the take up of direct debit payments for council tax. The Audit Commission, another member of the Steering Group, has carried out research which has identified that authorities, collectively, could realise efficiency savings of up to £15 million a year through improved performance.

The **South West** Centre of Excellence has received approval from the LIFT South West Management Board to release up to £250,000 to develop and pilot a standardised one-stop-shop support programme for corporate and transactional services including productive time. The programme will help local authorities to deliver quick benefits realisation and provide tools to assess the merits of shared services versus straight business process optimisation. The programme will also promote a standardised approach to enable sharing of services between local authorities where appropriate. The development is currently being piloted on a cluster of local authorities across the region. If the pilot proves a success, the Centre will subsidise the approach across ten other local authority clusters up to a total cost of £500,000.

Plans for a **London** mutual insurance company are progressing well as 11 boroughs have got either Executive approval to participate in setting up the company or are seeking formal approval. The company is limited by guarantee (provided by the participating authorities) with no share capital, meaning that control is vested solely with the participating members. Other London boroughs are monitoring developments closely and will consider joining as their current insurance arrangements allow. The project is also being followed by other UK local authorities who believe that the London example could be a template for other regions.

Environmental services

South East borough councils, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath, have plans to collaborate on the joint procurement and delivery of a shared service for refuse collection, recycling and street cleaning. Last year, the **South East** Centre of Excellence supported work to explore the benefits of this collaboration. The Centre is now working with the two councils to develop a detailed plan and will be providing a project manager. Potential benefits include cost savings through joint procurement, pooled expertise and a shared depot. Invitations to tender will be issued in summer 2007.

Local Public Transport

Funded by the **North East** Centre of Excellence, the Lynx Community Transport Service will enable Stockton on Tees and Hartlepool Borough Councils to provide an on-line, demand responsive bus service, particularly to their rural and disadvantaged communities.

The new service will allow residents to visit local facilities by linking individuals and key sites to vehicles via on-board terminals. Partnership working will also allow the introduction of home-working for staff, which in turn will allow the provision of seven-day telephone booking for passengers who are not currently on-line at home. The project is due to be launched in April 2007.

Supporting people

The **East Midlands** Centre of Excellence, in partnership with local Supporting People teams and Business Link Nottinghamshire, co-ordinated a programme of training and business support to ensure that suppliers are equipped to engage more effectively in forthcoming procurement opportunities. The training programme was designed specifically to build the capacity of local providers and was targeted at existing suppliers of Supporting People services and suppliers operating in similar social care markets.

It was clear from the feedback that nine out of ten organisations on the programme had no previous experience of competitive tendering and procurement processes. Delegates were asked about the likelihood of their organisation bidding for forthcoming Supporting People contracts and 95% responded positively.

An innovative project to improve outcomes for vulnerable adults has generated efficiency gains of over 25% in its first year. **East of England** Centre of Excellence provided £100K funding for the first stage of a project designed to realise efficiencies in floating support services for adults (and their families) making the transition from temporary to permanent housing. It is a resource intensive service where demand consistently exceeds supply.

The work builds on a project that was initiated in December 2004, (funded by the then ODPM Value Improvement National Programme) and led by Essex County Council together with Thurrock Unitary Council. Taking a strategic commissioning approach, early benefits of the project include:

- Securing cashable savings of £1.2 million p.a. on existing base contracts valued at £4.5m per annum (equating to £6 million over the life of a five year contract.)
- Increasing capacity by 20% for no increase in base budget, which equates to increasing service capacity for an additional 300 service users.
- Rationalisation of contracting and commissioning arrangements.

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- An improved, customer-focused service specification and tendering processes to help ensure that services can be targeted to the right people.
 - Better client/provider relationships.
 - Improved service and financial planning.

The Supporting People Regional Support Group is discussing opportunities for regional roll out of the project through a work plan covering the period 2007 – 2012, including publication of a Value Improvement Programme toolkit planned for Spring 2007.

General

A new software tool to analyse AES returns is now available to every local authority in England. Originally developed for use regionally, the **Yorkshire and the Humber** Centre of Excellence has collaborated with the esd-toolkit to publish the software on its website. Six AES reports can be generated from the on-line submissions link on the toolkit home page. They cover, for example, an analysis of overall progress against meeting efficiency targets, progress over a 12 month period in delivering predicted gains and priority areas for making gains across the Gershon work streams.

Another development from **Yorkshire and the Humber** is a new portal designed to promote and develop joint working in the region. It has been developed to promote the North Yorkshire region and includes organisational profiles, job opportunities, a bank of potential employees in the public sector, job advertisements and shared advertising campaigns from across the nine councils in North Yorkshire. The site has received 60,000 hits in the first seven weeks and can be found at www.oneplacenorthyorks.com. The initiative is anticipated to save £160K a year across the partner organisations.

Focus on the North West Centre of Excellence

Hosted by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, the North West Centre of Excellence is engaging stakeholders and delivering ambitious and successful projects. Further details are outlined below...

THE North West Centre of Excellence has considerably increased its profile and engagement with local authorities in the last 12 months - and it's done it through hard work.

One-to-one communication with stakeholders is the main way to win both their confidence and commitment to the efficiency cause – a fact that the NWCE learned early on.

And the investment in miles – 80,000 of them traveled on behalf of the NWCE in one year by regional director Colin Cram and director modernising services Miranda Carruthers-Watt – is reaping rewards.

All 46 councils in the region are now engaged with the NWCE and signed up to sub-regional collaborations.

Many are involved in several of the major projects being undertaken or supported by the NWCE and the centre has been particularly successful in engaging authorities in shared service and procurement projects.

It staged a showcase event in October – Bargain Hunt – that was the result of more than 20 months of work by the centre. Detailed purchase spend analysis had revealed how local authorities could save around £125 million a year on a total spend of £1billion. At Bargain Hunt, more than 180 representatives from 39 north west councils took up the centre’s offer to see how they could benefit from the potential savings.

“The event was extremely successful,” says regional director Colin Cram. “We are now building on that by ensuring councils now take up those opportunities to effect the savings.”

The NWCE is now working on a second catalogue of savings areas that will be revealed to councils at Bargain Hunt Mark II in spring this year.

The centre has also launched one of its most ambitious projects – The Vault. The Vault is an on-line contracts register that allows local authorities to see who has similar contracts and identify possible collaboration on contract renewals and extensions.

The Vault which has the potential to save £millions went live in December.

In addition to this, the NWCE is looking to install a regional procurement portal which will offer procurement capabilities on a regional, sub-regional and local level, as well as electronic pre-qualification questionnaires, requests for quotations, invitations to tender, management of the EU tender process, contract management facilities, and reverse and e-auctions.

The centre’s work in inspiring and supporting e-auctions has also gone from strength to strength.

Twelve councils saved £10 million in less than three months by entering into auctions arranged by the NWCE. The auctions were held for £30million of IT hardware, stationery and IT consumables and office furniture. Average savings on the three auctions topped more than 30 per cent.

Councils have also saved more than £2.3 million on a range of goods and services, including energy and consultancy, as a result of a partnership between NWCE and OGCbuying.solutions. The authorities have used purchasing agreements, set up by OGC buying.solutions on behalf of the NWCE, to buy goods and services valued at £18.6 million. There are now 40 such agreements which councils can access via the OGC buying.solutions web site and the bottom line is that local authorities can make savings of between 5% and 35% on a range of commodities.

The centre’s project looking at high cost placements for adults with physical and/or learning disabilities has now completed data gathering. One of the facts to be revealed is that, in some cases, there’s a 20 per cent variance in the fees being paid by different local authorities for the same type of placements with the same providers. The project team is now reviewing options for developing collaborative commissioning arrangements and achieving cost efficiencies.

The first in a series of best practice papers has been delivered by a transport project for which the centre has the national lead. The paper has revealed that local authorities could make individual savings of up to £1million a year by adopting Integrated Transport Units. Specific support is now being provided to a number of authorities - Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Dorset - in setting up ITUs.

Several other strands of the project are also progressing well, including a study that looks at the economies of scale to be gained from local authorities working together to procure transport services

from the private sector, and a study that is examining the benefits to be gained from standardising the contractual arrangements between local authorities, and the NHS, and taxi operators. This is a high priority as councils across England, as well as NHS agencies, are concerned about value for money from major expenditure on taxis.

For more information on the work of the Centres access their websites or contact them through our national website gateway www.rcoe.gov.uk

The Centres are supported by a Programme Management Team who can be contacted on 020 7944 4145.

News Round Up

Pre-Budget Report 2006

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown issues the *Pre-Budget Report 2006* to Parliament.

Specific announcements in the report relating to efficiency include:

- £13.3 billion of efficiency gains reported by local authorities against the target of over £21 billion by 2007-08 laid out in Spending Review 2004;
- The baseline savings ambition for the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR 07) will be at least 3 per cent per year across local and central government;
- Administration budgets across central government departments will be reduced by at least 5 per cent in real terms over the CSR 07 period;

- An early CSR 07 settlement for the Department for Constitutional Affairs will see its budget fall by 3.5 per cent over the CSR 07 period.

The report can be viewed in full on the [HM Treasury website](#).

HM Treasury, 06/12/06

The Varney Review on Service Transformation

Sir David Varney has published his report to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on *Service Transformation: a Better Service For Citizens and Businesses, a Better Deal for Taxpayers*.

Sir David, former Executive Chairman of HMRC and former Chairman of O₂, was commissioned by the Chancellor to advise him on

the opportunities for transforming the delivery of public services. His review looks at how the channels through which services are delivered can be made more efficient and responsive to the needs of citizens and businesses. The report acknowledges the achievements made in the past decade, and identifies opportunities to strengthen public service delivery to make it more accessible, convenient and efficient to meet changing citizen and business expectations.

The report's recommendations include:

- Developing a change of circumstances service starting with bereavement, birth and change of address by 2010, so that citizens don't have to notify multiple public services;
- Improving Directgov and Businesslink.gov so they

become the primary information and transactional channels for citizens and businesses, reducing the number of departmental specific websites and providing the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Paymaster General respectively with responsibility for the services;

- Improving public sector contact centre performance including reducing operating costs by 25 per cent to release £400 million;
- Developing a cross-government identity management system to enable greater personalisation of services and to reduce duplication across government;
- Building on a proof of concept project to share data between HM Revenue and Customs, DWP and 12 local authorities;
- Establishing new citizen and business contact roles and functions within departments to drive increased skills and capability to respond to citizen and business needs and to increasingly coordinate service delivery from a whole of government perspective;
- Developing better coordinated and focused

face-to-face services, through a cross-government estate strategy, underpinned with departmental plans for increased third sector delivery of these services and more mobile working; and

- Establishing service transformation as a top priority outcome for government, underpinned by a detailed delivery plan and quantitative performance indicators which form the basis of a published annual report on service transformation.

Service Transformation: a Better Service for Citizens and Businesses, a Better Deal for Taxpayers is available on the [HM Treasury website](#).

HM Treasury, 6/12/06

Government Vehicle Procurement Agreement

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) are leading a £1 billion deal which will enable the UK public sector to achieve significant savings in the use of vehicles.

Under the contract, fifteen vehicle manufacturers will provide Government

departments and organisations with greener, cleaner cars and vans at a reduced cost. This could save the taxpayer up to £100 million over the next four years. It will also assist the Government in meeting the target of reducing carbon emissions by 15% by 2010/11.

OGC, 04/12/06

Street Lighting Procurement Pack Launched

4ps has launched a street-lighting procurement pack designed to save councils time and money when procuring PFI/PPP schemes.

Information in the pack reflects current market practices such as competitive dialogue in order to provide councils and bidders with all of the necessary information on street-lighting procurement.

The procurement pack can be viewed on the [4ps website](#).

MJ, 07/12/06

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Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill Published

The new Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill has been introduced in Parliament.

The Bill is key to the delivery of the Government's public service reform agenda and the devolutionary vision set out in the White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*. It aims to enable local authorities and local service providers to work together more closely.

Key measures include:

- New opportunities for local government structural and boundary changes, including single tier unitary government;
- A duty on key public sector partners to cooperate with local authorities;
- A duty on local authorities to inform, consult and involve local people in improving local services and quality of life;
- Councillors to be empowered to resolve issues of concern to their communities through the Community Call for Action;
- Provisions for a new locally based conduct regime with a revised strategic role for the Standards Board;
- An end to the Secretary of State's role in confirming byelaws made by local authorities;

- The creation of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs).

The Bill can be viewed on the [UK Parliament website](#).

DCLG, 13/12/06

Assessing the Value for Money of OGBuying.solutions

The National Audit Office (NAO) has published its report on OGBuying.solutions, an executive agency of the Office of Government Commerce providing procurement services to the public sector.

The report shows that OGBuying.solutions has provided its customers with good value for money, achieving value for money savings of £412 million in 2005-06, up 71 per cent from 2003-04. The NAO concludes that OGBuying.solutions has the potential to increase its value for money savings even further, being ideally placed to take a greater lead in the public sector getting better value for money from procurement. However, this will require a step change in its performance, for example, securing greater volume commitment from customers when letting new framework agreements; reviewing its prices more regularly with suppliers;

using eAuctions where applicable; and minimising the cost to suppliers of dealing with OGBuying.solutions.

The report is available on the [NAO website](#).

NAO, 14/12/06

£2 Billion Simplification Plan Launched

Prime Minister Tony Blair has launched a government-wide action plan designed to save business and the third sector £2 billion in administrative costs.

The measures form part of the Government's target of cutting the administrative burden on business and the third sector by 25 per cent by 2010. Measures introduced to support the new programme include the upgrading of the web portal through which the public can suggest simplification ideas, a new campaign to identify regulations which conflict or overlap and annual updates on progress against the simplification agenda.

Details of the individual plans by Government department can be viewed on the [Cabinet Office website](#).

GNN, 11/12/06

Transformational Government Annual Report

The Government has published an annual report mapping the progress made with the Transformational Government strategy in 2006.

The report focuses on the three main themes of the

strategy; customer centric-services, shared services and professionalism. One of the key outcomes reported is that around 551 government websites are to be removed from the internet with relevant information to be migrated to the Directgov website. This aims to make information more easily accessible.

The report can be viewed in full on the [Chief Information Officer Council website](#).

GNN, 10/01/07

4ps - Corporate and Transactional Shared Services Network Group

Continuing its work in supporting local authority collaboration projects, running shared service workshops and providing guidance and case studies on implementing such projects, 4ps, local government's project delivery specialist, recently held inaugural meetings of a shared service network group for local government. Details of the meetings and some of the key issues and themes emerging from them are explored below.

The purpose of the Corporate and Transactional Shared Service Network Group (CATSS) for local government is to help share experience, lessons learnt and emerging best practice from and amongst those involved in shaping, forming, procuring, implementing and managing changes in service delivery through collaboration and sharing.

Held in London and Sheffield, these initial events brought together practitioners from a number of authorities with attendees from DCLG strategic partnership team, the South West Regional Centre of Excellence Lift programme, LGE, IDeA and other Regional Centres of Excellence to ensure common understanding.

Over 50 participants heard from speakers such as Debra Maxwell of Surrey CC's shared service centre and Tony Wiltshire, Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Centres of Excellence discussing the service prioritisation work undertaken in that region. More importantly, perhaps, they also identified and agreed the key issues and themes to be taken forward by the network group at what will be bi-monthly meetings from January 2007.

It should come as no surprise to hear that these emerged as:

- Lack of capacity to deliver this agenda, particularly in change management along with the need for financial appraisal and commercial acumen at the start of the project
- Understanding partnership models and how they will work; recognising the political dimension and how this affects governance and delegated decision making and the agreements that accompany them

-
- Baseline services – common definitions, processes, understanding of comparative metrics, costs and performance as well as understanding the existing asset base and support costs
 - Managing the transition to shared service delivery
 - Understanding and dealing with the complex HR implications
 - Need for pump-priming as well as ensuring that central intervention and national and regional support is channelled where it is needed most and a clear picture of who's doing what nationally.

The next network meetings will be held at the end of January and will therefore include practical sessions on sharing and learning from others' experience and best practice in the areas of:

- Robust business case development – proving shared service provides better value for money – for all?
- HR implications, particularly secondment, TUPE and harmonising terms and conditions
- What do we need to know – baselining services – toolkits and support available – with potentially a supplier's perspective

4ps also intend to launch the updated Corporate & Transactional Service procurement pack at these events along with new guidance on delivery models produced in conjunction with North East Regional Centre of Excellence.

The Network group will also be supported by:

- 4ps national database of PPP and PFI projects which can be found on <http://projects.4ps.gov.uk/new/user/userhome.aspx>. We would encourage those in the process of implementing such projects to register to this and provide the relevant data.
- a community of practice for shared services which will allow network members and others to view, edit, and publish details of events, documents that are of interest, link to other websites in a structured fashion and take part in on-line discussions in the themes identified at the inaugural meetings as well as those they may wish to add. A taster of how this will work (from January) can be found by accessing the demo community on <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/comm/communities.do>

If you would like to participate in the network group, receive more details on forthcoming agenda items or register to the projects database, please contact ian.richardson@4ps.gov.uk

Moving Joined Up Government into the Mainstream

Andy Key, director in PricewaterhouseCoopers government and public sector practice, questions if the time has come to move joined-up government into the mainstream

It is fair to conclude that this issue has been analysed, discussed and written about extensively. Type in joined-up government and Google returns 31 million results. But how far have we travelled along the road to seeing design and delivery of public services taking the practical steps required to turn elegant theory into practice - realising the full benefits to customer service and value for money that are claimed?

There have unquestionably been some notable successes, including the national initiative to reduce child obesity and the introduction of Local Area Agreements. And there is equally no doubt that senior government figures are enthusiastic about the potential that joined-up working offers to deliver desired policy outcomes effectively and efficiently. However, the truth is that the achievement of joined-up government is a highly challenging and demanding undertaking in a complex and ever changing environment.

Yet, the value to be gained from the transformational effects that 'joined-up' brings to the customer and the taxpayer is irresistible. There are plenty of examples in the private sector of organisations - with similarly high levels of complexity, public scrutiny and cost of failure - that have made the needs of customers their organising principle. None claim perfection. But the gains made along the way and the lessons learned highlight the goals towards which the public sector should be striving, in terms of increased productivity, growth and customer satisfaction. There is no reason why the public sector cannot make similar strides towards placing citizens' needs at the centre of its operations. When it does, the results can be astounding – witness the Identity & Passport Service's customer ratings that are well ahead of many High Street and Internet retailers.

So has the time now come to make joined-up government mainstream? The three prongs of the government's transformation strategy - back office reform, professional skills for government and front office reform – are providing a real attempt to join-up government in order to provide better value services for citizens. With the Varney recommendations adopted in the last pre-budget report there is at last a coherent and ambitious drive for change.

There will of course be further challenges and debate along the way. The current debate over the legitimacy - or otherwise - of the creation of a single repository of personal information on each citizen is just one example. Achieving change to organisational ways of working is not going to be easy. But the potential rewards in terms of efficiency and effectiveness are significant. With the ever increasing emphasis on value that underpins expectations of public service delivery, the will to achieve change has never been stronger. The mechanisms for breaking down silos and instilling new ways of working are well understood. It is now time to see them put into practice.

For further information on the contents of this article please contact andy.key@uk.pwc.com.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in the 23rd January 2007 edition of Whitehall and Westminster World.

Knowledge Source – Making Ends Meet

[Making Ends Meet](#) is a website run by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Audit Commission in order to promote better financial management in children's services and adult social care. The content and layout of the site has recently been refreshed.

Aimed at Councillors, Corporate managers, Social Services managers and Front line managers, [Making Ends Meet](#) addresses issues around the handling of finances that are essential in order to get the most out of the resources available and thus potentially deliver efficiency savings.

The site aims to answer key questions relating to social service budgets in order to ensure that Councils with Social Services Responsibilities are delivering the most from the financial resources available to them. Questions include:

- Do you have problems setting your budget for Social Services?
- Are you overspending on your budget and do you know how to tackle this?
- Are you targeting your money on your priorities?
- Do you understand where your money is being spent?

A further key theme explored on the site and related to the efficiency agenda is the effectiveness of partnership working. The site tackles issues such as the benefits and dangers of working in partnership and how to create and measure success.

Partnerships and Integrated Solutions is one of six modules explored, the other five being: Adults, Children, Financial Management, Performance and Commissioning. Each of these modules includes sections examining key questions and themes and pointing users towards specific sources, including reference documents, case studies and good practice examples.

Some example case studies with specific relevance to the efficiency agenda include:

- [Milton Keynes - Budget Efficiencies in Home Care](#);
- [Durham – Managing out-of-authority placements](#);
- [Hertfordshire County Council - Effective management of home care and linking services delivery](#);
- [Southampton – Partnership agreement](#);
- [Flintshire – Home Care Brokerage](#).

The site can be viewed in full at <http://www.makingendsmeet.idea.gov.uk>

Useful Links

Modernisation and Efficiency Division

Communities and Local Government
3/G5, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
E-mail: med@communities.gsi.gov.uk
Web: [Better Public Services](http://www.betterpublicservices.gov.uk)

Communities and Local Government

Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
Tel: 020 7944 4400
Web: <http://www.communities.gov.uk>

The Employers Organisation

Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG
Tel: 020 7296 6781
Web: <http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk>

Improvement & Development Agency and IDEA Knowledge

Layden House
76-86 Turnmill St
London
EC1M 5LG
Tel: 020 7296 6693
Web: <http://www.idea.gov.uk>
IDEA Knowledge: knowledge@idea.gov.uk

Audit Commission

1st Floor,
Millbank Tower,
Millbank,
London
SW1P 4HQ
Tel: 020 7828 1212
Web: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk>

4ps

South Entrance
7th Floor, Artillery House
Westminster, London
SW1P 1RT
Tel: 020 7808 1470
Web: <http://www.4ps.gov.uk>

Care Services Efficiency Delivery

Department of Health
Wellington House
135-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG
Tel: 020 7972 4641
Web: <http://www.csed.csip.org.uk>

Ourpartnership

c/o NCVO
Regent's Wharf
8 All Saints Road
London
N1 9RL
Telephone number: 0207 520 2428
Web: <http://www.ourpartnership.org.uk/>
E-mail: info@ourpartnership.org.uk

The Local Government Procurement Forum

Communities and Local Government
3/H6, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
E-mail: procurement@communities.gsi.gov.uk
Web: <http://www.communities.gov.uk>

The Local Government Task Force

Warwick House
25 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 0PP
Tel: 020 7837 8286
Web: <http://www.lgtf.org.uk>
E-mail: info@lgtf.org.uk

Constructionline and National Pre- Qualification Service

PO Box 6441, Basingstoke
RG21 7FN
Tel: 0870 607 1602
Email: mconstructionline@capita.co.uk or
<mailto:npqs@capita.co.uk>
Web: www.constructionline.co.uk or
www.npqs.co.uk

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

Cornwall Court
19 Cornwall Street
Birmingham
B3 2DT
E-mail: laura.divall@uk.pwc.com

Links to the Regional Centres of Excellence

East of England Centre of Excellence

Centre of Excellence East of England
East of England House
Meridan Way
Norwich
NR7 0TA
Tel: 01603 704 010
Web: <http://www.eastspace.net/eecpe/>

East Midlands Centre of Excellence

East Midlands Centre of Excellence
47 Loughborough Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7LA
Tel: 0115 977 3875
Web: www.emce.gov.uk

London Centre of Excellence

London Centre of Excellence
Association of London Government
59½ Southwark Street
London
SE1 0AL
Tel: 020 7934 9967
Web: www.lcpe.gov.uk

North East Centre of Excellence

North East Centre of Excellence
Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Street
Gateshead
NE8 1HH
Tel: 0191 433 2257
Web: www.nece.gov.uk

North West Centre of Excellence

North West Centre of Excellence
Tameside Metropolitan Borough
Council Council Offices
Wellington Road
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 6DL
Tel: 0161 342 4080
Web: www.nwce.org.uk

South East Centre of Excellence

South East Centre of Excellence
Kent County Council
Sessions House Room 1.60
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XQ
Tel: 01622 696 317
Web: www.kent.gov.uk/sece

South West Centre of Excellence

South West Centre of Excellence
Suite 5
Stowey House
Bridport Road
Poundbury
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 3SB
Tel: 01305 757 230
Web: www.swce.gov.uk

West Midlands Centre of Excellence

West Midlands Centre of Excellence
Sentinel House
The Courtyard
Harris Business Park
Hanbury Road
Bromsgrove
B60 4DJ
Tel: 01527 839 200
Web: www.wmcoe.gov.uk

Yorkshire and the Humber Centre of Excellence

Yorkshire & the Humber Centre of Excellence
1st Floor St George House
Great George Street
Leeds
LS1 3DL
Tel: 0113 247 5252
Web: <http://www.yhcoe.rcoe.gov.uk>

National website for the Efficiency Programme in Local Government.

Web: <http://www.rcoe.gov.uk>

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