



## North East Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership

### Local Authority Agile and Mobile Working: 'State Of The Region' March 2010

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 Background

At its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Services Programme Board considered a report which proposed commissioning some project scoping work around the theme of agile and mobile working.

It is intended that the Improvement & Efficiency Partnership will use this research to develop a recommendation to the Improvement and Efficiency Steering Group as to:

- Whether there is a sufficient business case for the Improvement & Efficiency Partnership to invest in agile and mobile working
- The best way to deploy c. £750,000 capital grant during 2010-11 in this field.

### 1.2 Moving forward

- Reviews and research suggest that significant benefits can be achieved.
- These include around 13% on central office accommodation and 3.5% productivity gains for central office employees.
- Corporate or Service Leads, Directors, Heads of Service and Middle managers believe the Improvement & Efficiency Partnership resources should be invested around:
  - Efficiency savings
  - Cultural change
  - Delivering proven business cases
  - Usability of technology
  - Greater understanding of
    - Collaboration tools / shared project space
    - Access to mobile / wireless networks
    - Conferencing tools
    - Shared teamzones
    - Touchdown points
- Possible themes for investment to deliver proven efficiencies and business case
  - Easier and wider access to mobile / wireless networks
  - Easy to use conferencing tools
  - Transformed working spaces and working practices (Cultural change)
  - Collaboration tools / shared project spaces

### 1.3 Methodology

An investigation of online literature documenting agile and mobile working initiatives in councils throughout the UK, in particular identifying use scenarios and business drivers.

An online survey was constructed including logic enabling the maturity assessments, technology survey and staff working practices and attitudes to be investigated in a single process.

During the Review and prior to the Survey, a scoping focus group was convened to ensure that the study was moving in an appropriate direction. This proved very useful and provided the basis of a number of explorations in the Survey.

## 1.4 Headline Findings

### **There is a problem of definition and understanding of the tools**

- 'flexible', 'remote', 'agile', 'mobile', 'smarter working' mean different things to different people.
- Many tools are new to the Local Authority arena.
  - 'Presence'
  - 'Touchdown'
  - 'Telepresence'
  - etc
- Descriptions of these should perhaps concentrate on the transformational business improvements they can bring.

### **There is frustration that policies and technologies are in place..**

..and proven benefits have been cited elsewhere

- Improved productivity and service quality
- Lower accommodation costs
- Reduced business miles

..but that more hasn't happened locally

### **There is a lack of efficiency-focussed case studies**

- There are few relevant case studies with quantified benefits
- Many are private sector, supplier sponsored or focus just on **mobile** or **home** working
- Locally benefits have been realised but not always measured

## It's not about home working

- There are headline - making case studies on the benefits of home working
- **Home workers – only 2% of central staff**
- Mobile workers – 4% of central staff
- Flexible workers – 22% of central staff
- Fixed workers – 80% of central staff
- Flexible working → 5 x the impact on accommodation savings and productivity improvements than home workers  
(spend at least 40% of their time away from their work base)

## Could do more..?

- Corporate and Service Leads said that overall there is:
  - low levels of home, mobile or hub working, high levels of flexible working and medium levels of job sharing
  - a high level of investment in appropriate technologies
  - low staff confidence that they can deliver high quality service to customers or meet delivery targets when working flexibly, remotely, or smarter
  - a low level of Technical, legal and HR training provided to managers
  - a low level of promotion of the benefits to all staff
  - a low level of policies and procedures to reduce the overall number of journeys made by staff

## Who's being enabled?

- Frontline
  - Environmental services
  - Housing
  - Regulatory services
  
- Back office
  - Environmental services
  - Housing
  - Regulatory services
  - Economic development
  - Policy & performance
  - ICT
  
- Across all staff grades

## What tools are in place

- All have implemented wireless laptops.
- Most have
  - document scanning or sharing
  - browser access to their corporate network or to email and calendar.
  - secure portable flash drives.
  - online training or knowledge systems
  - hotdesking
- Some have
  - real time mobile access to corporate dashboards.
  - employee WiFi
  - conferencing suites
  - touchdown points
- A third have not implemented any conferencing technologies.
- Only one organisation has meeting room lifesize video conferencing.
- None have implemented presence.
- A third have not implemented online timekeeping, car mileage, holiday forms or expenses.
- A minority have technologies and tools for workers outside their organisation.
- Around half have implemented guest WIFI – **only half of these promote it.**

## **Barriers and frustrations**

- Barriers
  - Cultural change
  - IT infrastructure and management
  - Manager reluctance
  - Cost
  
- Frustrations
  - Complexity of security procedures
  - Usability of technology
  
- Responsibility for realising benefits doesn't necessarily lie with those leading
  - In many cases ICT is taking the corporate lead on agile / mobile working

## **Survey respondents said that the following would help them become more agile / mobile**

- conferencing tools
- collaboration tools
- remote access to the corporate network
- ability to use wireless networks
- remote access to management information
- ability to book hotdesks



## Opinions on investment

- Corporate or Service Leads, Directors, Heads of Service and Middle managers said that Improvement & Efficiency Partnership resources should be invested around around:
  - Efficiency savings
  - Cultural change
  - Delivering proven business cases
  - Usability of technology
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