

# Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs)

Programme achievements and legacy



# Summary report

## Scope of report

This document provides a summary of some of the key areas of success of Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) between 01 March 2008 and 31 March 2011. The report sets out examples of RIEP work that should be highlighted as good practice.

## RIEPs

The RIEPs were created in April 2008 to build on the achievements of the Regional Centres of Excellence and Regional Improvement Partnerships. The intention being to provide an integrated and sector-led approach to improvement and efficiency at the regional, sub-regional and local levels. Led by councillors, RIEPs are partnerships of local authorities working together on shared improvement and efficiency priorities. The RIEPs use local connections and local knowledge to help councils, fire and rescue services and their partners to improve services and become more efficient. Each English region had its own RIEP.

## Summary of achievements

RIEPs have helped facilitate a step change in improvement and efficiency activity in local government. The strong evidence of success demonstrates the sector's capacity to lead its own improvement and achieve tangible results. From an initial Department for Communities for Local Government (DCLG) investment of £185 million the RIEPs are reporting that they

have already helped councils and Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) save over £700 million. It is predicted by the RIEPs that this figure is likely to double by 2013. The RIEPs have been prominent in developing the Local Productivity Programme. This is the LGA's programme that aims to help councils make the significant savings required by the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 (CSR10).

As well as these quantifiable savings the RIEPs have performed an equally important role in helping the sector to take greater responsibility for its own improvement. Each RIEP has facilitated networks that help councils to help each other in key areas of risk such as children's services, adult social care and corporate finance. Many RIEPs, are politically led and have engaged with councils with performance and financial issues to support how they deal with their challenges. In part this has laid the path for the LGA's work on self-regulation and improvement, (Taking the Lead). The RIEPs have been at the forefront of the implementation of national policy, particularly in transforming service delivery via shared services, supporting big society and piloting community budgets.

RIEP work continues to be delivered through regional agencies. For example in the East Midlands where the RIEP remains active and now sits within East Midlands Councils, three RIEPs continue and information about their work can be found at:

[www.improvementeast.gov.uk](http://www.improvementeast.gov.uk)

[www.southeastiep.gov.uk](http://www.southeastiep.gov.uk)

[www.westmidlandsiep.gov.uk](http://www.westmidlandsiep.gov.uk)

# Overview by theme

## Procurement

A leading area of RIEP work has been in improving council procurement activity. All RIEPs have developed or supported regional or sub-regional procurement hubs. These have aided collaborative procurement, significantly reduced officer time spent on process and made procurement opportunities more accessible to small and medium sized businesses. RIEPs have successfully facilitated the development of major framework contracts, and encouraged collaborative procurement and purchasing in new ways. Examples include buying energy from the wholesale market and using e-auctions to drive down costs. RIEPs are driving down the cost of construction through the National Improvement and Efficiency Partnership for the Built Environment and the Local Productivity Programme. The RIEPs have had notable successes in encouraging the inclusion of social measures into contracts, for example job creation and sustainability measures. The RIEPs have supported the sector in making significant savings through procurement, and leave a strong legacy in each of the regions for example the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO).

### Examples

(click title to read the case study)

#### **The Yorkshire and Humber Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (YoHr Space) YoHr Build Framework**

– <http://tinyurl.com/65gwwyv>  
The YoHrbuild Construction Framework was set up with funding from YoHr Space. The vision for YoHrbuild is to create a regional framework for procurement of construction contracts by local authorities, blue light organisations and third sector organisations.

#### **Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands's (IEWM) procurement programme**

– <http://tinyurl.com/6dkkrne>  
IEWM has placed a very strong emphasis on procurement as a key regional vehicle for driving efficiency. Our starting point has been with corporate procurement, though our approach has also developed to focus collaborative action on all 'big spend' areas.

#### **Improvement and Efficiency South East's Business Portal**

<http://tinyurl.com/5teadxk>

The South East Business Portal (SEBP) is a web based tool which allows local authorities to upload their current contracts and business opportunities, across all service areas in the south east region. This allows authorities to share the documentation and best practice, which leads to savings in officer time and third party costs.

## Shared Services

An increasingly important area of activity has been supporting authorities to explore shared services options. The Local Productivity Programme has mapped over 200 examples of shared services across the country, many of which have been supported by the RIEPs. The RIEPs have supported different approaches, from the more traditional sharing of back office services to shared front office services, sharing with other public sector organisations and joint management structures.

RIEPs have provided pump-priming support and external facilitation in order to ensure a clear shared vision and strong foundation is in place, before detailed implementation starts.

### Examples (click title to read the case study)

**Improvement and Efficiency**  
**South East's support shared Chief Executives at Adur and Worthing**  
<http://tinyurl.com/69dfuhy>

A project enabling other Local Authorities to take the merged management structure model and implement it learning from the innovators; Adur & Worthing. This highlights opportunities for two authorities or more to work in partnership to deliver services in order to make significant cashable savings and improvements.

**Click here to view the video**  
<http://tinyurl.com/5vzsy8x>

**Improvement East's support for councils to test and develop shared services** – <http://tinyurl.com/42spwww>

Improvement East have developed a case study library of the support work they have delivered to councils looking to share services. Examples include the Suffolk Collaborative, which brings together representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors in Suffolk to develop a culture of collaboration across organisations and Suffolk Coastal and Waveney shared Chief Executives.

## Changing the way services are delivered

The RIEPs have helped authorities change the way they provide services to improve performance and drive major efficiencies. The RIEPs have worked with businesses and the markets to try to improve access and reduce costs and bureaucracy associated with working with local authorities.

Authorities have used business process improvement methodologies such as lean and systems thinking to challenge and improve the way they do business. RIEPs have supported this imperative to reshape business through rapid reviews, funding consultancy support and training staff in methodologies to embed learning in organisations. RIEPs have helped authorities to deliver customer focussed projects underpinned by improved customer intelligence. Innovative uses of technology have been developed to make savings. The Business Improvement Package is a web based resource that was created collectively by the RIEPs to support authorities to transform service delivery. This is available on the Productivity and Efficiency Exchange.

### Examples (click title to read the case study)

#### **Capital Ambition out of hours call handling project**

<http://tinyurl.com/3w3tdfs>

A project to implement a new out of hours call handling system which delivered a reduction in costs by a third and service improvements across London Boroughs.

#### **Delivering Efficient Corporate and Transactional Services (DECATS)**

<http://tinyurl.com/3wj4o54>

The Delivering Efficient Corporate and Transactional Services (DECATS) is used across several RIEPs. The project utilises a diagnostic toolkit designed to enable a high-level review of all of council services. The ultimate aim of the DECATS project is to improve service to customers, create a workforce which will be happier in what they do and to develop processes which are more efficient and cost less.

## Asset management

Asset management is identified as a significant efficiency opportunity in government's Operational Efficiency Programme. Potential savings are estimated to be £1.5 billion per annum across the public sector estate. RIEPs have provided support and advice for local authorities and other public sector bodies in this regard. One of several leading examples is a study by Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands that has identified the opportunity to save £640 million regionally. This opportunity is now implemented by the West Midlands Property Alliance.

RIEPs have been successful in fostering collaboration and partnerships around capital and assets across the country.

### Examples (click title to read the case study)

#### **East Midland Improvement and Efficiency's property alliance**

<http://tinyurl.com/3scyl4m>

The East Midlands Property Alliance (empa) has been formed by Local Authorities in the East Midlands to improve the delivery of property services to their communities. Empa is tasked with providing best practice and efficiency savings to the local authorities for construction and related services. Over the next five years the empa framework contracts are forecast to deliver construction projects valued in excess of £600 million. Net savings of £30 million are forecast for the empa local authorities during this time scale.

**Click here for more information**

<http://tinyurl.com/3eqspo3>

#### **North West Improvement and Efficiency's construction hub**

<http://tinyurl.com/3msxj9a>

The North West Improvement and Efficiency construction hub allows design and engineering consultant services to be procured efficiently. By establishing three construction frameworks – high, medium and low value – which are open to any of the region's local authorities. As well as gaining added value by commissioning contractors via the framework, there is the potential to make savings of up to £100k at a single stroke on individual tenders.

**Click here for more information**

<http://tinyurl.com/3wq8wca>

#### **Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands's asset management programme**

– <http://tinyurl.com/6fuk3ls>

IEWM has conducted a major asset management pilot study in the West Midlands. 'The Way Forward' has highlighted the potential to yield £640m over the next ten years.

#### **North East Improvement and Efficiency's managed construction frameworks**

– <http://tinyurl.com/5v4d55s>

North East Improvement and Efficiency developed managed frameworks for construction and highways with opportunities for councils to collaborate on procurement. The benefits of these frameworks will be maximised through region wide procurement and management.



# Adult Social Care and Children's Services

The RIEPs have supported networks such as the regional Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) groups to share learning and improvement techniques in these high risk services. An example is support to increase sector capacity through training. As well as offering support to councils around key areas such as safeguarding and management of risks RIEPs have been influential in championing new preventative and cost reduction approaches. For example, the North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership identified savings of over £13 million from a range of telecare projects. These help vulnerable older people to remain safely in their own homes. The Care Funding Calculator and other fair pricing tools have been extremely helpful in achieving greater transparency and consistency of cost for social care placements, whilst reducing the workload for providers. Regional networks have provided the opportunity for the sector to take a more strategic view on provision in high cost areas.

## Examples

(click title to read the case study)

### **The North West Improvement and Efficiency's foster care network**

<http://tinyurl.com/64gcw3z>

Local authorities across the North West have collaborated for the first time on a major media campaign to recruit more foster carers across the region. The cross authority campaign including a joint media recruitment campaign delivered 150 more foster carers across the North West with a projected saving of £3.7million.

### **YoHr Space support for strategic commissioning**

<http://tinyurl.com/67x8b3o>

A programme designed to build sustainable commissioning competence and capacity across Yorkshire and the Humber in order to deliver the Transforming Social Care agenda.

**Click [here](#) for more information**

### **Improvement and Efficiency South East, Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands and East Midlands are jointly developed care funding calculator** – <http://tinyurl.com/5wb38kc>

The Care Funding Calculator (CFC) was developed to help council's care commissioners and providers strike sustainable deals through increased understanding of care costs. Councils using the CFC currently save on average 12%. The CFC tool is now being used nationally by local authorities and is starting to be used by PCTs.

# Localism and community budgets

The RIEPs have used their strategic position to influence and encourage wider public sector partners to work collaboratively to solve long standing issues. RIEPs have supported total/parallel place work. Groups of councils have focused on priority groups and pilot and exploratory work continues. The Big Society white paper is due to be published on 11 July 2011. It is anticipated that the number of pilot and themes will be increased.

## Examples

(click title to read the case study)

### **South West Improvement and Efficiency's funded projects to tackle issues vulnerable families**

<http://tinyurl.com/66ap3sd>

A locally focused project was piloted establishing an integrated team to serve the needs of vulnerable families. The project has already led to several families avoiding losing their homes as a result of intensive and coordinated support.

### **North East Improvement and Efficiency's Total Place workshops**

<http://tinyurl.com/6z57xh6>

North East Improvement and Efficiency worked with the Institute for Local Governance to research and distil key lessons from the Total Place national pilots (started in late 2009). A series of workshops took place along side research to inform and assist leaders of North East public services as they address new challenges in public service delivery following in the budget and Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010.

### **Improvement East's support for parallel places** – <http://tinyurl.com/6fz3q3k>

Improvement East has provided a total of £1.19 million for upper-tier partnerships to work on Total Place activity in 2009-10 under the banner of 'Leadership of Place' work.

## Self regulation and benchmarking

The RIEPs can justifiably demonstrate a key role in the sector's improvement story. The RIEPs worked with the individual authorities and national sector led bodies such as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) (now part of the LGA). This can be evidenced in improved Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) ratings across all councils in all regions. In 2007, just prior to the establishment of the RIEPs there were 33 councils with a bottom 2 category CPA rating. By the end of the CPA regime this had been reduced by 50 percent to 15. Improvement continued to be supported by RIEPs during the brief period of Comprehensive Area Assessment.

RIEPs were proactive in providing resources, both money and peers/people, from within the sector to support councils experiencing difficulty. Much of this assistance was routed through Improvement/Advisory Board partnership working.



RIEPs have made significant progress in helping councils to benchmark their performance. A number of RIEPs are working with the LGA to develop Local Government Inform (LG Inform), which is an online service providing a practical response to the sector's call for greater freedom to take responsibility for its own regulation and improvement. LG Inform will provide the opportunity to share key metrics on performance and efficiency.

# Legacy conclusion

The work of the RIEPs has helped ensure that the sector is in a stronger position now to take ownership of its own performance and self regulation. The LGA will continue to work collaboratively with the RIEPs and legacy organisations to ensure the continuing improvement and efficiency work is supported. The current position is:

- All regions have transition plans in place, and have prioritised ongoing work through new/transferred governance arrangements.
- All RIEPs are making available knowledge and learning to be connected to the LGA Knowledge Hub
- DCLG funding package of £185 million is fully committed.
- RIEPs are reporting projected savings of £1.5 billion by end of CSR10.
- With diminished resources, improvement and efficiency partners (RIEPs, LGA, regional local government and councils with their partners) will continue to strive to collaborate to provide cost effective joined up offers.
- RIEP work continues to be delivered through regional agencies. For example in the East Midlands where the RIEP remains active and now sits within East Midlands Councils, three RIEPs continue and information about their work can be found at:

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