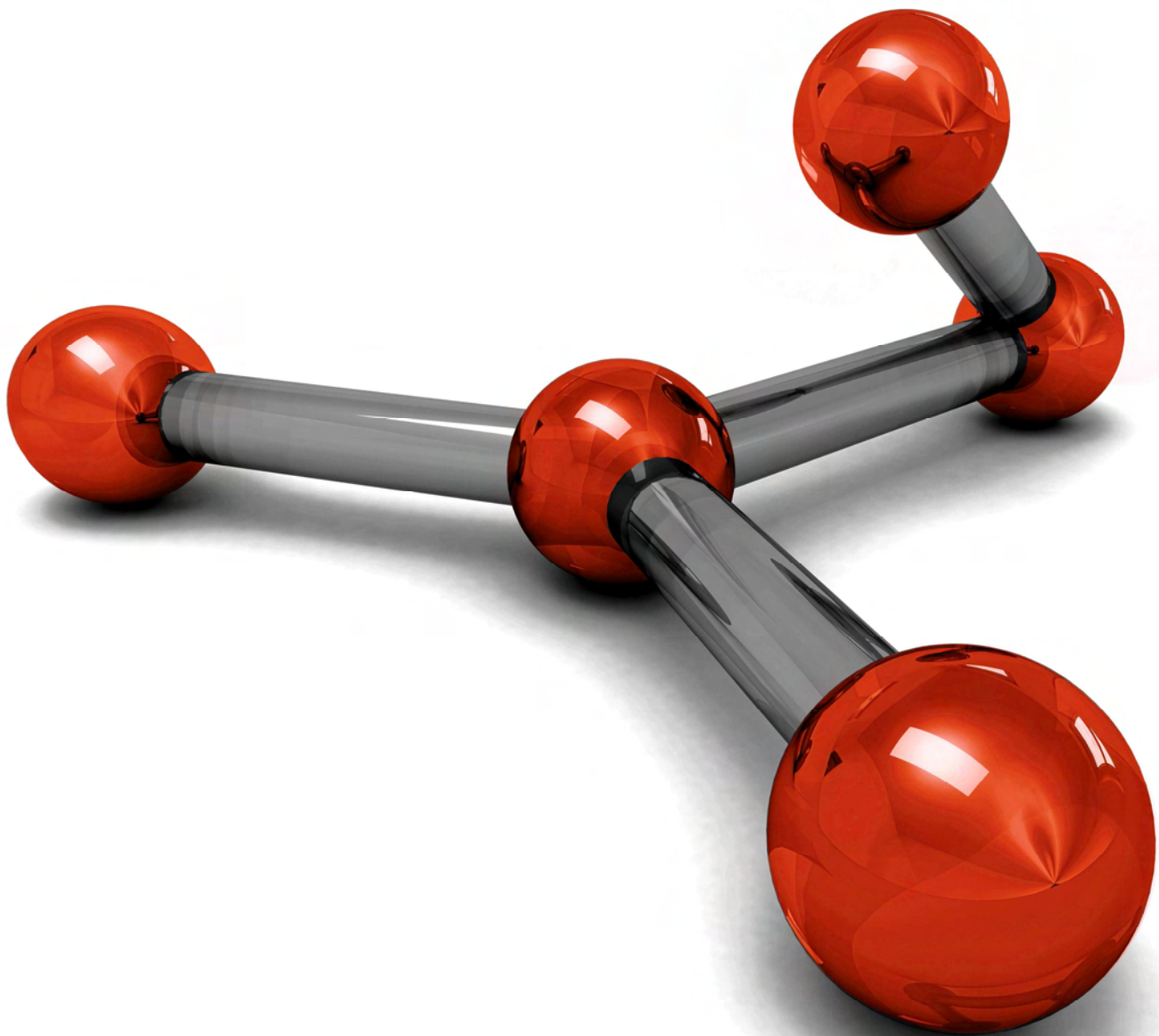


# Local Authorities and HSE Partnership: An evaluation

Management Summary

15th September 2008



At PA Consulting Group, we **transform** the performance of organisations.

We put together teams from many disciplines and backgrounds to tackle the most complex problems facing our clients, working with leaders and their staff to turn around organisations in the private and public sectors. Clients call on us when they want:

an **innovative** solution: counter-intuitive thinking and groundbreaking solutions

a highly **responsive** approach: we listen, and then we act decisively and quickly

**delivery** of hard results: we get the job done, often trouble-shooting where previous initiatives have failed.

We are an independent, employee-owned, global firm of 3,000 talented individuals, operating from offices across the world, in Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia, and Oceania. We have won numerous awards for delivering complex and highly innovative assignments, run one of the most successful venture programmes in our industry, have technology development capability that few firms can match, deep expertise across key industries and government, and a unique breadth of skills from strategy to IT to HR to applied technology.

- defence • energy • financial services • government and public services • international development
  - life sciences and healthcare • manufacturing • postal services • retail • telecommunications • transportation
- 
- strategic management • innovation and technology • IT • operational improvement
  - human resources • complex programme delivery

## Delivering business transformation



# 1 Management Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

This management summary sets out the key findings and recommendations from an evaluation of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authority (LA) partnership undertaken by PA Consulting in the summer of 2008. The evaluation sets out to answer three key questions:

- To what extent has the partnership delivered on the seven commitments in the 2004 Statement of Intent?
- Do the benefits of the partnership outweigh the costs?
- What does the partnership need to do going forward to ensure its long-term health?

This evaluation is based on the premise that there is a need for a partnership to deliver the required outcomes, and assesses the effectiveness of the current arrangements for doing so. The evaluation seeks to build on the findings of a stocktake of October 2007<sup>1</sup> with a wider analysis of all aspects of the partnership, including a greater focus on whether the benefits outweigh the costs.

For the purposes of this report, we use the term 'partners' to mean all bodies that are currently engaged in the partnership - HSE, Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) and the 410 Local Authorities.

## 1.2 Key findings

Overall, the partnership is in good health, having produced a "step change" in the relationship between HSE and Local Authorities. The partnership is now delivering improvements in health and safety standards through greater consistency of enforcement, concentration of collective effort on areas of highest risk and through the greater impact that comes from joint communications, widespread co-ordination and joined up inspection projects and promotional activity.

---

<sup>1</sup> Available at [http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/committees/hela/171007/h4\\_01.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/committees/hela/171007/h4_01.pdf)

The partnership has achieved much, moving from a historic situation of co-existence to a position where partners now very clearly align their respective activities and support each other where appropriate. There is a high level of consensus between partners, both at operational and strategic level about the strengths of the partnership, in particular the role of Partnership Managers, teams and the supporting central bodies, in building up levels of trust and improving the flow of information and communication between partners. There is now more effective joint working on the ground, resulting in improved working relationships between partners and a better understanding of their mutual strengths. Partners have moved from a culture of distrust to a sense of greater equality and this should not be underestimated as one of the achievements of the partnership. In our opinion the partnership has matured well during its first four years and the foundations are in place for continued success.

In response to the three key questions asked as part of this evaluation:

### **1. To what extent has the partnership delivered on the seven commitments in the Statement of Intent?**

The partnership has delivered against much of the Statement of Intent, particularly in the areas of communication, the flow of information between partners and the provision of training, guidance and support. Commitments on performance management, auditing and examining the institutions and legal framework underpinning the relationship between HSE and Local Authorities are perceived to be only partially delivered. Section 1.3 of this management summary explores this in more detail.

### **2. Do the benefits of the partnership outweigh the costs?**

Overall, the benefits of the partnership were perceived by partners to outweigh the costs. Key benefits focussed on the more targeted use of resource, effective joint working on the ground, improved levels of trust between partners and greater sharing of information. There is anecdotal evidence of the partnership having a positive impact on overall health and safety outcomes but, as ever with partnership evaluation, it is difficult to prove a direct causal link between the partnership rather than the partners activities. It was widely recognised that in order to sustain the benefits of the partnership, the current steady state costs of the partnership would need to be protected. This is explored in more detail in section 1.4

### **3. What does the partnership need to do going forward to ensure its long-term health?**

The partnership should continue to build on its success to date by maintaining and developing the Partnership Teams and their supporting infrastructure and ensuring there is greater communication about the roles and responsibilities of the high level governance structures.

In order to move to the next stage of development the partnership must address some key issues - implementing a more robust performance management framework to ensure consistent delivery of health and safety outcomes, greater alignment of planning cycles between partners' and further improvements to the flow of information and communication.

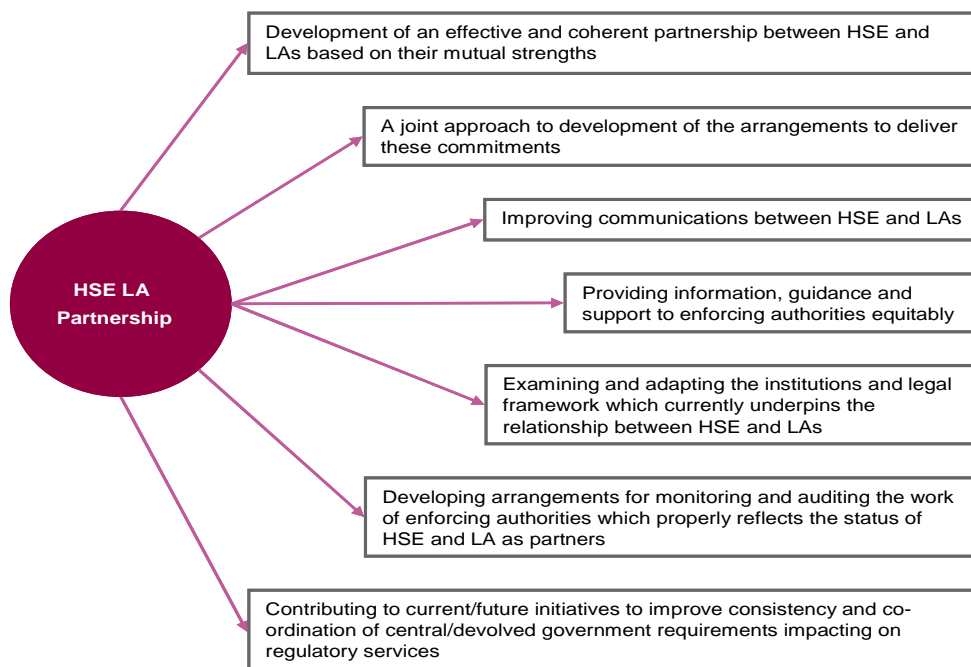
The current successes of the partnership are not consistent across regions and there is a need to ensure greater consistency in engagement, recognising that in a world of limited resources, 100% engagement is not practical.

This is explored in more detail in section 1.5.

## 1.3 Delivering against the Statement of Intent

The commitments in the 2004 Statement of Intent set out the aims and objectives for the partnership:

**Figure 1. The seven commitments of the 2004 Statement of Intent**



Results from the on-line survey and in-depth interviews show that the partnership has delivered well on many of the aims and objectives and an overview of progress is provided in table 1, below:

**Table 1: Summary of how the partnership has delivered against the Statement of Intent**

Statement of Intent	How has the partnership performed?
Development of an effective and coherent partnership between HSE and LAs based on their mutual strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ Better targeting of resources towards priority areas as a result of joint working and joint planning of projects.</li> <li>√ A more trusting relationship between partners with better mutual understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>√ Better on the ground working relationship through joint visits and inspections.</li> <li>√ Raised profile of Health and Safety within Local Authorities.</li> </ul>
A joint approach to development of the arrangements to deliver these commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ Increased role of Local Authorities in decision-making process through fora such as LACORS and the Local Government Panel (LGP).</li> <li>√ More effective fora for Local Authorities and HSE to plan how they will deliver priorities e.g. regional and county level fora.</li> <li>X Sufficient engagement of Local Authorities in the setting of strategic priorities.</li> </ul>
Improving communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ Improvements in the flow of information between partners (HSE and Local Authorities but also inter-authority) through Partnership Teams.</li> </ul>

Statement of Intent	How has the partnership performed?
between HSE and LAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ Increased informal communication as a result of joint visits and inspections.</li> <li>√ Better links between HSE and Local Authorities through LACORS.</li> <li>√ HELex extranet an invaluable source of information for Local Authorities.</li> <li>X Clear and robust communications above regional group level.</li> </ul>
Providing information, guidance and support to enforcing authorities equitably	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ Increased access to training, support and guidance for Local Authorities from HSE.</li> <li>√ Access to the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) was invaluable.</li> <li>√ Increased sharing of advice between partners on joint inspections.</li> <li>X Full exploitation of the Local Authority opportunities to provide information, support and guidance to other Local Authorities.</li> </ul>
Examining and adapting as necessary the institutions and legal framework which currently underpins the relationship between HSE and LAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ Introduction of the Section 18 Standard which applies to all Enforcing Authorities.</li> <li>√ Greater representation of views of local councillors at a strategic level with the HSE Board through the LGP.</li> <li>√ Review of Enforcing Authority Regulations resulting in the introduction of the Flexible Warranting initiative.</li> <li>√ Reconstitution of HELA to provide strategic oversight of the partnership between Local Authorities and HSE, including setting up specific Task and Finish Groups to drive forward projects.</li> <li>X Clarity at operational level about high-level governance structures.</li> </ul>
Developing arrangements for monitoring and auditing the work of the enforcing authorities which properly reflects the status of HSE and LA as partners (for example, replacement of the LAe1 form)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ Raised profile of monitoring and auditing e.g. through the HELA Task and Finish Group to ensure compliance with the Section 18 Standard.</li> <li>X Lack of effective and robust auditing mechanisms such as inter-authority auditing and peer review.</li> <li>X Clear measures of success for the partnership.</li> <li>X Effective performance management of Local Authorities, particularly those that are less effective in delivering on health and safety outcomes.</li> </ul>
Contributing effectively to current and future initiatives to improve the consistency and co-ordination of central and devolved government requirements which impact on regulatory services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ Greater flexibility in enforcement boundaries, currently through the piloting of flexible warrants.</li> <li>X Clarity about the role of the partnership going forward in relation to the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO).</li> </ul>

Key: √ - largely delivered. x - areas for further development

## 1.4 Do the benefits of partnership outweigh the costs?

The evaluation has shown that there is a high degree of consensus between partners at both operational and strategic level that the benefits of the partnership outweigh the costs, through more focussed and targeted enforcement, the degree of trust and cooperation that has developed as a result of the partnership and in the "softer" benefits that joint working has brought to partners.

The following benefits were identified as part of the evaluation:

**Table 2. Table showing summary of benefits arising from partnership working**

Benefit	Description
More effective joint working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved operational team working through joints visits and inspections and at a strategic level through county and national groups.</li> </ul>
Improved communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better communications between partners at an operational level e.g. more informal joint working and contact on the ground and at a strategic level e.g. between LGP and HSE Board.</li> <li>Improved written communications for duty holders, especially in the LA sector.</li> </ul>
Better customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More responsive service to duty holders in resolution of enforcement issues.</li> <li>Improved ability to respond to duty holder demand for information and guidance on a wider range of subjects.</li> <li>Improved response to complaints which involve two duty holders or where there is an issue of lack of consistency in enforcement.</li> </ul>
Improved confidence of Local Authority inspectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training, advice, guidance and support to Local Authorities has increased Local Authority inspectors' confidence in enforcing health and safety.</li> <li>This has also increased HSE inspectors confidence and respect for LA inspectors.</li> </ul>
Facilitated delivery of Fit3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment of an estimated 350 LA FTEs which otherwise might not have been provided.</li> <li>Better targeting of Local Authority resource to nationally identified risks and priorities.</li> <li>Partnership Teams and Managers playing a role in helping to facilitate effective delivery of Fit3 through the production of joint work plans.</li> </ul>
Improved strategic links between HSE and Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closer strategic links strengthened by HSE and LGP meetings.</li> <li>Inter Local Authority links strengthened.</li> </ul>
Better targeting of resources towards priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased level of dedicated resource focused on nationally agreed health and safety activity.</li> <li>Improved understanding by HSE of the Local Authority sector leading to better identification and targeting of risks in LA enforced premises.</li> <li>Various flexible warranting initiatives which re-directed Local Authority resource to the highest risks or made more efficient or effective use of partners resources.</li> </ul>

Benefit	Description
Better enforcement outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is anecdotal evidence of better enforcement outcomes as a result of the partnership in that the combination of HSE and Local Authority inspectors working together on site has meant better identification of issues, improved consistency of enforcement standards and understanding of issues.</li> <li>• More rigorous and consistent enforcement process e.g. improved training and development opportunities for Local Authority inspectors.</li> <li>• Quicker resolution of issues by partners.</li> </ul>

As with many partnerships, however, it is difficult to prove a causal relationship between changes in output and outcome measures i.e. that changes in enforcement notices, prosecutions and injury levels are a direct result of the partnership.

HSE have estimated the costs of the partnership as about £2 million - of which £700,000 for the Local Authority Unit and £1.3 million for Partnership Teams<sup>2</sup>. This accords with our understanding of the high level costs of the partnership. It should be noted that some of these costs would be incurred irrespective of the existence of the partnership in that Local Authorities would still be Enforcing Authorities and require support and oversight from HSE (through LAU). We are therefore proposing that the direct costs of the partnership are the incremental costs incurred, that is, the partnership teams and 2.5 FTE within LACORS.

Most respondents to the survey felt very strongly that the degree to which the relationship between Local Authorities and HSE has improved since the partnership has been in place outweigh the cost of the partnership, and that although these benefits were often intangible, they were extremely valuable.

## 1.5 Ensuring the long term health of the partnership

The evaluation has shown that there are a number of areas where the partnership is performing well and which should be maintained to ensure continued delivery of partnership benefits. These include the need to continue to fund partnership teams, protect the role of Partnership Manager, communicate more widely roles and responsibilities of the existing governance structures and share best practice. These recommendations are critical to maintaining the benefits arising from the current partnership.

As part of our evaluation we have identified additional areas where significant opportunities exist for the partnership to develop:

- Partnership teams: Greater formalisation of the roles of the partnerships teams and a more structured approach to PLO secondments.

---

<sup>2</sup> These are reported in the addendum to HSC/06/09  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/hscarchive/2006/140206/c09addendum.pdf>

- Governance structures: Comments emerging from the focus groups supported the need to review or simplify the existing governance structures, as well as make improvements to the way they currently operate and are communicated to partners.
- Standard setting and performance management: The evaluation has shown, improving performance management and monitoring of the partnership as one of the key areas where progress needs to be made.
- Planning cycles: The evaluation has shown that the partnership has made progress in ensuring HSE involve and engage Local Authorities early on in the planning process, for example through Fit3 planning. However due the nature of planning cycles there are still tensions and further work should be undertaken to understand the practical steps that could be taken to minimise these.
- Flow of information and communication: Whilst this area was seen to be a very strong aspect of current partnership working, there are still ways in which the partnership could improve the way it shares information and communicates between partners. This could focus on greater inter authority communication as well as looking to the external image of health and safety.
- Training and development opportunities. HSE currently provides a range of training to Local Authorities on a variety of topics. The evaluation clearly shows that the provision of training and development opportunities by HSE is highly valued and this provides a basis for further development.
- Wider stakeholder engagement: There were a number of suggestions from focus groups and in-depth interviews about ensuring that the partnership engages more effectively with its stakeholders at a number of different levels. The driver behind these suggestions was that the wider health and safety *system* incorporates a much wider set of delivery partners than just HSE and Local Authorities. Incorporating these wider stakeholders would better deliver health and safety outcomes.
- Enforcement allocation: Many staff at focus groups and in the in-depth interviews felt that the ongoing division of responsibilities still hampered effective partnership working. A review of the current roles and responsibilities in enforcement by partners would be helpful and could lead to increased benefits.

Each of these areas is developed in more depth within the main report.

## 1.6 Summary of key recommendations

The table below sets out the key recommendations for the partnership.

**Table 3: Summary of Recommendations**

Topic area	Recommendations
Maintaining the partnership	<p>(1) Continue to resource Partnership Teams and the supporting infrastructure.</p> <p>(2) Ensure the role of Partnership Managers is protected.</p> <p>(3) Clarify and communicate more widely the roles and responsibilities of high level governance structures and bodies.</p> <p>(4) Explore ways in which successes could be more widely publicised and how best practice can be shared across Local Authorities.</p> <p>(5) HSE and LACORS to examine ways of communicating more effectively with other Local Authority services where synergies with health and safety exist.</p>
Partnership teams	<p>(6) Formalise the roles and responsibilities of Partnership Teams and Managers.</p> <p>(7) Examine ways of ensuring a more structured approach to the secondee process, with a rolling programme of funding for the role of the Partnership Liaison Officer and communicating this Local Authorities.</p> <p>(8) Examine ways of helping local authorities release staff for secondment to PLO roles.</p>
Governance structures	<p>(9) Review the effectiveness and robustness of the existing governance structures and look at ways to improve them.</p>
Standard setting and performance management	<p>(10) Build in new permanent monitoring arrangements for the Section 18 Standard and explore how compliance with the Section 18 Standard will be monitored, including establishment of peer review process and exploring possibility of benchmarking Local Authority performance.</p> <p>(11) Explore options for the development of a programme of support to be provided to Local Authorities where performance is in need of improvement.</p>
Improving current planning arrangements	<p>(12) Assess feasibility of mechanisms for engaging Local Authorities further in the HSE planning cycle.</p> <p>(13) Explore how HSE can develop guidance for Local Authorities in line with their own planning cycles even if HSE decision-making is incomplete.</p>
Enhancing current flow of information and communications	<p>(14) Explore ways of improving inter-authority collaboration through more sharing of good practice and experiences between Local Authorities.</p> <p>(15) Consider how to engage further local councillors and Chief Executives in the health and safety system, looking at existing mechanism such as LGP or new ways of doing this.</p>
Training and development	<p>(16) Test options for better sharing of Local Authority expertise to HSE and extending out HSE training to Local Authorities.</p> <p>(17) Raise awareness of the Buddy Inspector scheme within Local Authorities.</p>

Topic area	Recommendations
Wider stakeholder engagement	(18) Explore ways that the partnership can engage more widely with external stakeholders.
Enforcement Allocation	<p>(19) HSE and Local Authorities to work together to examine how the current enforcement boundaries could be developed.</p> <p>(20) Review the distribution of risk in health and safety and subsequent redrawing of the enforcement roles and responsibilities of HSE and Local Authorities.</p>