



**Evaluating the new flexible and trade
partnerships within HELA's Lead
Authority Partnership Scheme:
One year on**

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Evaluating the new flexible and trade partnerships within HELA's Lead Authority Partnership Scheme: One year on

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The Lead Authority Partnership Scheme was established in 1991 with a view to improving consistency of enforcement in multi-outlet organisations and at the same time bringing about improvement of the company health and safety management system. An essential element of the scheme is the requirement for the Lead Authority to carry out a Safety Management Review audit of the company. The scheme has more recently been extended by the introduction of Flexible Partnerships (FP) and Trade Association Partnerships (TAP). The FP requires the Lead Authority to become familiar with the partner company's policies and procedures as they relate to health and safety management. A benchmark evaluation of 8 FP and 2 TAP was carried out during the summer of 1999. This report represents a follow-up evaluation that took place after approximately 18 months of operation. It provides details on the motivation for participation, the practical steps taken and issues relating to consistency of enforcement. The results demonstrate that the majority of partnerships have been successful in improving the company health and safety performance. However improvement in consistency of enforcement is less clear. A number of recommendations are made for possible future action. These are based on encouraging liaison through improved information and more active publicity of the scheme to promote up-take. The publicity should focus on the improvements gained in the organisations and personal benefits for staff within Lead Authorities.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	v
CHAPTER 1	
Introduction and project rationale	1
Aims of the follow-up evaluation	2
Outputs from the project	2
Methodology	2
CHAPTER 2	
Summary of findings	4
Status of the pilot partnerships	4
Aims, benefits and barriers to participation	5
Partnership development	8
Liaison issues	11
Measuring performance	12
Role of the LAU and viability of the scheme	13
CHAPTER 3	
Discussion	17
Recommendations	19
APPENDIX	21

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes a project that reviews:

- The development of the a pilot group of FP and TAPS following a benchmark evaluation; and
- The success of these partnerships against the aims of the scheme.

The research is based on follow up interviews with both Local Authorities and Organisations from 10 partnerships (8FP and 2 TAP). The work was carried out over the period mid October 2000 to early January 2001.

The issues

This research presents evidence which suggests that the Flexible Partnerships and the Trade Association Partnerships are working together successfully for the benefit of both partners. The original aims of the scheme are being achieved although the evidence for improved consistency of enforcement through liaison with the Lead Authority is equivocal. The partnerships may be successful on limited resources. The Flexible Partnerships therefore represent a way of encouraging further partnerships to be established.

The recommendations for further development of the scheme are focused on:

- Providing additional information to new partnerships, for example case studies;
- Encouraging liaison with present partnerships through improved information. This could include for example a partnership database accessible through the internet and available to both Local Authorities and organisations; and
- Publicising the concept to encourage more up-take by outlining the benefits of the scheme and building on experiences.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT RATIONALE

The Lead Authority Partnership Scheme was initiated in 1991. The aim of the scheme was twofold:

- To improve the consistency of enforcement by Local Authorities within multi-outlet companies; and
- To improve the health and safety management systems in these companies.

An essential element of the scheme was the requirement for the Lead Authority to carry out a safety management review audit on the Partner Company. This audit enabled the Lead Authority to develop an in-depth understanding of the health and safety policies, systems and procedures of the company. During 1991-1998 a large number of partnerships were established under this principle.

An evaluation of the scheme took place in 1996 (BPRI 1996)¹. This evaluation highlighted a number of issues that included:

- Cost of participation;
- Level of liaison;
- Poor up-take by non-partner Local Authorities/ poor rate of expansion;
- Concentration of partnerships in the bank and retail sectors; and
- Little opportunity for Trade Associations and small/medium firms to participate.

To address these issues the scheme has been refocused and two further partnership concepts were established in 1999. These are the Flexible Partnership (FP) and the Trade Association Partnership (TAP) and are described in the HELA Local Authority Circular 44/31 (Developments in the Lead Authority Partnership Principle).

The FP requires the Lead Authority to become familiar with the partner company's policies and procedures as they relate to health and safety management. A model agreement sets out a framework describing the ways in which this can be achieved. Significantly there is no explicit requirement to carry out a formal safety management review and as a result there is no requirement to produce a Lead Authority Circular. Completing a SMR is an option open to the partners. The concept of FP is not restricted to health and safety enforced by Local Authority Environmental Health. Partnerships have also been established to include safety of petroleum dispensing which is enforced by the Petroleum Licensing Authorities (PLA). The TAP scheme provides the Lead Authority with the opportunity to advise and assist a Trade Association on a range of health and safety related issues.

Twelve pilot partnerships (10 FP and 2 TAP) were established during the spring of 1999. A benchmark evaluation of these partnerships was carried out during the summer of 1999. The evaluation focused particularly on individual attitudes and expectations concerning the partnership and the anticipated practical steps involved.

This report represents the results of a follow-up evaluation exercise that took place after approximately 18 months of operation.

¹ BPRI. Research to assess attitudes of existing and potential participants towards the Lead Authority Partnership Scheme, April 1996. Business Planning and Research International on behalf of the HSE

A further review of SMR based partnerships took place in 2000 (internal report for LAU ref. 4093/R68.053). This review provides details of the process and cost of carrying out an SMR, the on-going development of the partnerships, the effectiveness of liaison between Local Authorities and views on the value of more flexible approach. The results of this complement the present study.

AIMS OF THE FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION

This evaluation took the form of interviews with the staff from each of the pilot partnerships that had participated in the initial evaluation. The project aimed to establish:

- Achievement of expectations
- A framework of practical steps
- Measures of success by
 - The amount of liaison between Local Authorities and the Lead Authority
 - Improvement in health and safety performance
- Role of the LAU

Views and information gathered after 18 months of operation have been compared with benchmark evaluation carried out at the outset of the scheme. This follow-up provides an opportunity for the success of the partnerships to be assessed with a view to informing policy development of the scheme and possible future actions.

OUTPUTS FROM THE PROJECT

The results from this research include:

1. A summary of the interviews which address the subjects defined in the project aims; and
2. Discussion and recommendations on the future development of the scheme.

METHODOLOGY

The project was carried out in 3 phases that included:

1. Construction of a semi-structured questionnaire appropriate to two groups;
 - Companies and Trade Associations
 - Lead Authorities
2. Interview with key personnel from each partnership; and
3. Analysis of data and report preparation.

Stage 1 Construction of semi-structured questionnaires

Two semi-structured questionnaires were constructed. These formed the basis for interviews. A number of the questions, highlighted (*), were reviews of the initial questions used in the benchmark exercise. A number of questions were requested by the LAU. The questions addressed the following:

1. Update on the partnership
2. About the Flexible Partnership/Trade Association Partnership
 - Aims*,
 - Benefits*,
 - Approach*,
 - Barriers*
 - Resource requirements
 - Future plans (for this partnership and others)
3. Liaison issues
 - Amount/type
 - Encouraging liaison
 - Improvement in consistency of enforcement
4. Health and safety performance
 - Improvement
 - Measures of success*
5. Views on the way forward for the scheme
6. Role of LAU

Stage 2 Conducting the interviews

The semi-structured interviews were carried out with personnel from each partnership who are responsible for the partnership. In the majority of cases these staff had participated in the benchmark exercise. However three interviews took place with different people. For the review questions (*), reference was made to points outlined by the interviewee during the benchmark interview. The questionnaires were piloted against the first 2 interviews and as a result a small number of prompt questions were removed.

The majority of interviews took place at the organisation or Local Authority, although a number were made by phone. When arranging the interviews all interviewees were asked to consider the question relating to amount of resource used for the partnership. The whole question set was provided in advance if requested by the interviewee.

The final interview proformas for the two groups are presented in Appendix 1.

Stage 3 Data analysis and report preparation

The data, based on the interviews, were recorded, collated and analysed. A summary of the findings is presented in chapter 2 of this report.

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The information gathered from these interviews is summarised under the following headings:

- Status of the pilot partnerships
- Aims, benefits and barriers to participation;
- Partnership development;
- Liaison issues;
- Measuring performance; and
- Role of the LAU and viability of the scheme.

The majority of data are presented to provide the Enforcing Authorities view and the Organisation view. However a number of questions have been analysed to present partnership responses.

STATUS OF THE PILOT PARTNERSHIPS

Pilot partnerships

Table 1 illustrates the partnerships in the initial pilot group:

	Enforcing Authority	Organisation
Flexible Partnerships	Bedford City Council	Charles Wells Ltd
	Derby City Council	Partco Ltd
	Leeds City Council	Poundstretcher Ltd
	London Fire Brigade	Texaco Lt (Petrol Stations)
	Luton Borough Council	Debenhams Retail plc
	Milton Keynes Council	Argos Distributors Ltd
	St Edmundsbury Borough Council/ Spelthorne	Green King Pub Company
	Southampton City Council	Fitness First
	Stoke on Trent City Council	Halfords Ltd
	West Yorkshire Fire Service	William Morrisons
		Supermarkets (Petrol Stations)
Trade Association Partnerships	Birmingham City Council	Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC)
	Wolverhampton Borough Council and	National Association of Steel Stock holders (NASS)
	HSE Midland Region	

Pilot partnerships not progressing

The Enforcing Authorities of the two pilot partnerships that had not established their partnerships at the time of the initial benchmark exercise were contacted again to verify whether any further progress had been made.

Derby City Council and Partco have been unable to develop their partnership further. Partco was taken over by Unipart over a year ago and the reorganisation resulting from this has not been completed. However the partners are very enthusiastic and hope to start partnership work in the near future.

West Yorkshire Fire Service felt it would be very unlikely that a formal partnership will ever be established with William Morrison Supermarkets (petroleum dispensing). Although the relationship between the two organisations is positive, the number of staff at Morrisons is very small and with most of the work contracted out, there is little staff resource available for partnership work.

Summaries of these interviews are presented in Appendix 1.

Other changes in partnerships

The remaining partnerships were asked about changes in arrangements or staffing that had effected the partnership.

One partnership has experienced particularly significant change. The partnership with Green King Pub Company was transferred from Spelthorne Borough Council to St Edmundsbury Council in October 1999. This transfer occurred because Green King has closed down its offices and distribution centre at Staines (Spelthorne). The headquarters for the company is based in Bury St Edmunds and the company already has good relationship with this Local Authority.

The partnership between Birmingham City Council and ABC has been affected by long term sickness of the Lead Officer at Birmingham. At the time of interview no other staff were available to carry out the partnership work. As a result the partnership work has slowed down and ABC rather than Birmingham City Council have dealt with liaison queries from other LAs. This partnership has had a number of changes in Lead Authority staff since it was established. The researchers were unable to carry out an in-depth interview at Birmingham City Council.

Other comments concerning staff changes are summarised below:

Lead Authorities

	No. of responses
● Restructuring or overall reduction in staffing levels may have long term implications	4
● Staffing remains unchanged	3
● Involved extra staff to ensure coverage and continuity	2

Organisations

● Staffing remains unchanged	8
● Extra staff involved at a practical level	1
● Staff will change shortly due to promotion	1

AIMS, BENEFITS AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Aims of the partnership

The participants were asked to consider whether the aims outlined in their benchmark interviews remained the same after several months of operation. The results are summarised in tables 2 and 3.

Lead Authorities

Table 2 Summary of partnership aims: Lead Authority views

Aim	No. of responses
Improve consistency of enforcement and advice from LAs	9
Improve health and safety performance in partner organisations/member companies	7
Act as a focus for other LAs and the company	4
Develop or improve sector specific guidance/standards	3
Assist similar organisations	2
Enable the Lead Authority to learn how business operates	2
Give kudos to the Lead Authority	1
Improvement in communication and consultation across the industry (petroleum dispensing)	1

Many of the aims outlined by the Authorities in the benchmark exercise remain the same. All those interviewed maintained their view that consistency of enforcement is a key aim of the partnership. However several were doubtful that this had been achieved (see later). Improving health and safety performance of the company has become more important. Some partnerships are working towards this goal whilst others feel that it has been achieved. Two new aims were identified. The kudos perhaps demonstrates the importance of partnership in the present political climate, this was further highlighted when interviewees were asked to consider benefits. Improved communication demonstrates the potential for development in specialist sectors.

The organisations

Table 3 Summary of partnership aims: Organisation views

Comment	No. of responses
Improve consistency of enforcement	10
Improve standards of health and safety	7
Access to expert advice and assistance	4
Understand how each other operates	2
Justification for internal funding of health and safety activities	2
Increases openness between members and enforcers (TAP)	2
Improve communication with and between LAs	1
Educate LA in business practice	1

Again many of the key aims remain the same. All those interviewed identified consistency of enforcement as an aim. However several companies recognised that it was not a particular problem for them or it is difficult to achieve (see later). Perhaps linked to this is the recognition that improved communication with other Local Authorities might be difficult (this was considered a main aim in the benchmark study). The number recognising the opportunity for the improvement in health and safety standards has increased. The larger organisations appreciate the benefits of access to expert advice.

Benefits of participating

Closely linked to the aims, the participants were asked to reconsider the benefits that had arisen from participating in the partnership. The main responses are summarised in tables 4 and 5.

Lead Authorities

Table 4 Summary of benefits from partnership enforcers' view

Benefits	No. of responses
Personal development of partnership staff at the Lead Authority	9
Kudos for the Lead Authority	7
Provides resource/ saves time for other LAs	5
Develops business awareness within Lead Authority department (staff training)	3
Improves health and safety standards	3
Company easier to deal with	2
Development of partnership potential	2

In the benchmark study developing business awareness was described as a key benefit. This was expressed in terms of corporate and individual development. Having experienced the partnership those interviewed have focused more particularly on their personal development. There is recognition that opportunity for development of others is limited, possibly because of time constraints. 'Kudos' has become more important in relation to partnership work, ('it is better to be in a partnership than not'). A number of those interviewed continued to express the view that the partnership should assist other Local Authorities through access to expertise and by reducing the length of visits and inspections. However several expressed doubts that this is happening. Two Authorities recognised that partnerships can lead to additional activity e.g. good neighbour events.

The Organisations

Table 5 Summary of benefits from the organisation view

Benefits	No. of responses
Improve health and safety performance	7
Strengthens contribution of health and safety professional	6
Helps Lead Authority and company understand each other	5
Improves consistency of enforcement	2
Kudos for the company	1
Reduction in work load for other Local Authorities	1

Several organisations acknowledged that there has been improvement in their health and safety performance as a result of the partnership. The number expressing this view has increased compared with the benchmark study. The role of the health and safety professional is strengthened through access to expertise, achieving higher standards and having a better working relationship with Environmental Health Officers (EHOs). Developing an understanding of how each other operates remains important. Consistency of enforcement and reducing the workload for other local Authorities are no longer key benefits.

Barriers to success

The participants were asked to describe any barriers they had encountered in developing and maintaining the partnership. Some felt there were no major barriers. Other comments are summarised in tables 6.

Table 6 Barriers encountered by the partnerships

Barrier/concerns	Lead Authority responses	Organisation responses
Lack of resources in Lead Authority	4	2
Lack of liaison between Lead and other Authorities	3	4
Role of Lead Authority if LA prosecutes company	3	0
Unsure company is really committed to improving health and safety	2	0
Lack of resource in company	1	1
Credibility of flexible approach	1	0
Competence of staff at Lead Authority to deal with issues	0	1

A wide range of concerns and barriers were expressed in the benchmark, but many of these were found to be unwarranted. For example some organisations were concerned about the potential conflict between advice and enforcement which could lead to extra resource requirements for the implementation of controls. This has not been their experience. The main barriers continue to be the lack of resource within the Lead Authorities and the lack of liaison between Local Authorities.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A number of questions were posed in relation to the development of the partnerships.

Business activity covered by the partnership

The partners were asked to describe the areas of the work activity covered by the partnership and whether this had changed. In all cases, except two, the areas had remained the same. I.e. retail outlets, warehouses, and managed pubs. Green King has changed partners and the new partnership includes tenanted pubs in addition to managed pubs. Argos and Milton Keynes have added warehousing to their coverage. The TAPS continue to focus on the provision of guidance and advice.

Practical steps for partnership development

The partners were asked to describe the activities undertaken to enable the Lead Authority to learn how the company managed health and safety. This was compared with their anticipated strategy that had been described at the benchmark interview. Reasons for changes from this initial strategy were discussed. The results for the Flexible Partnerships are presented in table 7.

Table 7 Activities undertaken during partnership development

Action taken	No of partnerships
Lead Authority assessed a comprehensive range of health and safety documents	8
Feedback provided (commonly by letter, verbally or meeting minutes)	8
Company incorporated feedback (improvement or maintaining standards)	8
Lead Authority visited a number of premises outside patch to assess the practical implementation of policies (observation and interview)	3
Lead Authority carried out routine inspection of premises within area	1
Lead officer obtained feedback from other inspectors on the patch	1
Lead Authority carried out no additional inspections/visits	1
Visits still to be arranged	2
Report prepared/planned by the Lead Authority	3
Regular meetings and other forms of contact established (see later)	6

All partnerships have followed very similar steps. Following documentation assessment and feedback, the companies incorporated suggestions into their systems. This was frequently achieved through negotiation between the individuals involved and did not require approval from senior management (changes do not normally require significant expenditure). Variation has arisen following this initial work on the number and detail of follow-up visits. A small number of Lead Authorities have produced formal reports.

The TAPS are working towards different goals. In practice the Lead Authorities have been assisting in the development of policies and documentation. This has been achieved at NASS but not at ABC because of sickness.

Change in strategy

The partners were asked to consider changes in their strategy for this development phase. Five FP and the TAPs reported that there had been no change in strategy from their initial plans. However three FP had not achieved as much as originally planned because of resource limitations within the Local Authority. Three partnerships have changed their strategies. These are described below:

- Following a number of accidents in the organisation, one partnership is on 'hold'. The Lead Authority is seeking to receive a commitment from the company senior management to the partnership before investing further resource.
- The company involved in this partnership is a medium sized organisation with a high proportion of outlets based in the Lead Authority area. The Lead Authority planned to gather information from routine inspections and from neighbouring Local Authorities. However after the document assessment they decided that there would be a strong local influence and therefore they conducted a mini SMR and visited a number of outlets across a wide geographical area.
- This Lead Authority planned to obtain feedback through audit reports, from other Authorities and by visits outside their district. In practice the Authority relies on feedback from local inspectors and the company. The strategy has evolved rather than changed, however the initial person involved has now retired and the new lead officer commented that he would feel uncomfortable making visits outside the district.

Level of understanding of the company health and safety management system

The interviewees from the Lead Authorities were asked to estimate their level of understanding of the company health and safety management system, with a view to being competent to address liaison queries from other Local Authorities. There were a range of responses from 'intimate understanding', through '75%' to 'some knowledge but not a good grasp'. This may reflect the amount of time spent on the partnership and the relationship that has developed between those involved. One interviewee expressed the view that the level of knowledge was sufficient to answer the liaison queries he had received.

Future plans

Having been in a partnership for over a year, the participants were asked to describe any future plans. Five partnerships have developed a routine that they wish to maintain, two have planned a review after a trial period, and two aim to visit a number of outlets to audit the implementation of the documentation. The Lead Authorities working with NASS are hoping to run some training courses based on the guidance that has been developed. 'Wishes', usually from the company representatives, included extending the partnership to cover other work activities.

Resources used for partnership work

The partners were asked to provide an estimate of the amount of staff time used in the partnership work since they were established. Very few were able to provide exact figures. Table 8 summarises the Lead Authority responses

Table 8
Estimates of Lead Authority resources used for the partnership

Staff time per year	No. of partnerships
Less than 1 week	1
2 weeks	3
2-3 weeks	1
3-4 weeks	2
Several months	1 (NASS)
Too soon	1 (new partner)

There was a general view that the figure would not fluctuate in subsequent years.

The organisations

Eight of the organisations thought there was none or minimal resource used for the partnership. Many expressed the view that the work would have been done in any case. Two companies provided more exact figures.

- 10 days - much of this is associated with a mini audit that was carried out by the Lead authority
- 12 days - this is associated with regular meetings/contact. The partners are in different geographical locations.

Practical aspects of maintaining the partnership

The partners were asked to describe how they maintain their partnership. Responses from the Lead Authorities were confirmed by descriptions provided by the Organisations and are summarised in table 9.

Table 9 Maintaining the partnership

Type of contact	No of partnerships
Regular meetings	7
- Quarterly*	6
- regular intervals	1
Occasional meetings	3
As the need arises	2
Still in development phase routine not established	1
Additional contact phone, email, post	8
Exchange information on accident/incident data and correspondence from EHOs	5
Topical issues/problems/plans discussed	8
LEA provides input to the development of policies and procedures (guidance for TAPs)	10

*this includes ABC but Birmingham have not always attend

Additional activities include visits to stores to consider particular issues. Two companies are not proactive, but in general the companies are most active in the setting up meetings and making contact.

LIAISON ISSUES

A number of questions were asked in relation to liaison with other Local Authorities and about improved consistency of enforcement.

Amount of liaison

The Lead Authorities were asked about the amount and type of liaison with other Local Authorities that had occurred since the partnership was established. Table 10 illustrates the volume of activity.

Table 10 Amount of liaison

No. of liaison contacts since established	No. of Enforcing Authorities
0	2
1-5	2
6-10	3
11-15	2 (incl.TAP – LA and HSE)

(no data from Birmingham City Council)

Comments concerning the nature and quality of the queries illustrated a range of topics including risk assessment, training and stock control. The queries are often related to the issuing of notices and are frequently faxed. National and local issues are commonly confused. Some companies will refer an EHO to Lead Authority if necessary.

Should more liaison be encouraged?

Having experienced the liaison process the Lead Authorities were asked if more liaison needs to take place. Many were unsure (6). It was suggested that the relatively low number of liaison queries may reflect the high standards of health and safety in the participating organisations. (Although this could also be interpreted in other ways). Three Lead Authorities felt that the amount of liaison is adequate. However all were agreed that publicity is important. This could include guidance on type of liaison issues, details of partnerships and case studies, and use of email and the Internet. The Lead Authority Circulars produced to announce SMR partnerships are not generally used by those interviewed.

Role of the company in ensuring liaison

The organisations were asked if they were aware of the amount of liaison taking place between their partner and other Local Authorities. The majority of companies (5) were aware of the amount of liaison because such information is exchanged at the partnership meetings. The 3 cases where the amount of liaison is less clear represent different working relationships between partners or less successful partnerships. Many organisations are active in publicising the partnership by ensuring that their managers are aware, posting the information on notice boards, in manuals and on the Intranet etc. One partnership has also helped present papers at industry group meetings (petroleum). In the case of Birmingham City Council, ABC is dealing with one query a week from member organisations. However it is unclear how many of these would be relevant to the liaison process.

Organisation view of consistency of enforcement

The organisations (excluding the trade associations) were asked if there had been an improvement in consistency of enforcement. The responses presented in table 11 demonstrate a wide range of experience.

Table 11
Improvement in consistency of enforcement: company experience

Improvement	No. of responses	Views
Yes	2	● Attitude of inspectors has improved
Some	2	● Room for improvement
None/very little	2	● Still variation
Unclear	2	● Volume of visits so low it is impossible to say

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Improvements in the company health and safety management systems

The organisations were asked to describe improvements in their health and safety management systems as a result of their partnership. All agreed that improvement had taken place. Specific improvements mentioned included:

- Induction training
- Health and safety documentation
- Employee consultation
- Raised awareness
- Production of industry documentation/guidance (TAP)

A number of those interviewed (usually from large organisations) felt that their partnership is part of an overall continuous improvement programme and specific improvements could not be defined. One organisation noted that the limited input from the Lead Authority had created little opportunity for improvement.

Measuring performance of the partnership

In the initial benchmark exercise a question was asked about the measures that could be used for measuring performance. Both Lead Authorities and organisations made a range of suggestions, some examples are presented below.

- | Lead Authority | Organisation |
|---|---|
| ● Number and type of contact from other LAs | ● Review what has been achieved |
| ● Results of SMR/audit/ interview | ● Interactions between H&S Prof and EHOs |
| ● Output achieved against plan | ● No. of EHO letters/notices and accident rates |

In this second interview partners were asked two further questions about measuring performance. Firstly, had the partnership been able to take any measures and secondly was it important if measures had not been taken.

The results presented in Tables 12 and 13 illustrate that that very few measures are taken.

Lead Authorities

Table 12 Lead Authority comments on measures being taken

Are measure taken?	No. of responses	Comments	Does it matter?	No. of responses	Comments
No	7		No	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not worth the effort ● Kudos is the driver ● Chief would want it
Yes- being planned	1 (NASS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uptake of new guidance ● Responses from other LEAs 	Yes	1	
Unclear	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Based on added value for personal development 	Unclear	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TAP

The Organisations

Table 13 Organisation comments on measures being taken

Are measure taken?	No. of responses	Comments	Does it matter?	No. of responses	Comments
No	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One organisation noted that their accident rate had dropped by 45% and no. of letters from EHOs had reduced. 	No	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No time ■ Partnership is part of a larger programme for improving health and safety
Yes- being planned	1 (ABC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Questionnaire to members 	Yes	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Important to try ■ To ensure policy is cost effective
Unclear	1(NASS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 	Unclear	0	

The tables illustrate that the Flexible Partnerships have not introduced performance measures. Several of those interviewed made a number of suggestions similar to those described in the benchmark study. However these are not being used for a variety of reasons including, low numbers, the amount of effort required or results not directly attributable to the scheme. A number of possible measures have been identified in the TAPs, where they are more likely to be required.

ROLE OF THE LAU AND VIABILITY OF THE SCHEME

Role of the LAU

Two questions were asked about the role of the LAU. One concerned the guidance and support provided by the LAU when the partnership was established. The majority of Lead Authorities (8) felt that the support of the LAU was adequate. Several had modelled their partnership agreements on the outline agreement provided by the LAU. Specific suggestions for additional guidance included the liaison process (when, what and how) and basic key steps in the setting up a partnerships e.g. ensuring senior management commitment to the partnership. In general the organisations had not had a large amount of direct contact with the LAU. 7 felt the guidance and support was adequate, 2 had no experience of the LAU whilst one company had experienced some staff difficulties.

The second question sought the views of interviewees on how the LAU can ensure success of the Scheme. The question included a number of suggestions - reform user groups, development of a website, amend the training currently available and combining with the Home Authority Scheme. Interviewees were encouraged to comment on these suggestions and also to add their

own ideas. The comments are from both Lead Authorities and Organisations are summarised in table 14.

Table 14 Role of the LAU in ensuring success

Suggestion	No. agree	Comments
Create a LAPS Website	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Must be maintained and updated by LAU ● Should contain a complete list of partners with the status of each partnership described ● Some Local Authorities do not have access to the web (3 comments)
User groups / seminars	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Could be divided by business sector ● Most preferred the idea of occasional (regional) seminars ● Must be organised by the LAU ● An internet User group could be an alternative ● Useful to exchange and develop good practice - benchmark
More publicity	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Needs to be publicised more actively, especially within Local Authorities ● Printed sources such as Environmental Health News should be used ● Benefits and case studies should be included ● Demonstrate the equal status to SMR based partnerships
Combine with Home Authority	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Could be useful in some partnerships
Training	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Existing LAPS course helpful ● Specialist courses might be identified e.g. petrol dispensing

There was general agreement between Lead Authorities and Organisations concerning the potential developments by LAU. The Website and User Groups/Seminars were considered helpful. Although there was strong emphasis on the LAU organising and maintaining such activities. More publicity in many forms was thought to be important.

FP as a viable national scheme

The partners were asked to consider the FP as a viable national scheme. The majority of those interviewed expressed the view that it is a viable scheme. A number of comments and concerns were also expressed these included:

- Enables partnership to develop at own pace
- Allows LA with smaller resource to participate (not so resource intensive)
- Useful for source of information
- Produces uniformity
- More partnerships need to be formed (more Local Authorities involved)
- Resource limitations at Local Authorities is a problem
- Must achieve something. Choose appropriate partners

One Lead Authority felt that although the scheme is successful at a local level, it is not viable at a national level because there is a lack of commitment from other Local Authorities.

Extending the partnership principle

Having worked in a partnership for several months, the Lead Authorities were asked if they would be willing to establish additional partnerships. Two enforcing authorities have already established further partnerships. Leeds City Council has a Flexible Partnership with the charity Riding for the Disabled. London Fire Brigade has established Flexible Partnerships for petrol dispensing with both Tesco and Sainsbury's. All other interviewees (8) were enthusiastic about further partnerships, but 6 were aware of the resource limitations within their Authorities.

The Interviewees were also asked to consider how the partnership has affected their attitude to other partnerships. The majority recognised that it does encourage them to contact other Lead Authorities when appropriate.

Comparison of the Flexible approach with the full SMR based approach

Partners were asked to compare the two approaches and whether they could achieve the same goals. Not surprisingly the responses reflect the advantages of the flexible approach.

Lead Authorities

Two Authorities were unable to comment on the comparison. The majority felt that it was possible to achieve the same goals through the two approaches but time, resources available, the nature of the activity and the aims of the partnership will influence this. One Authority felt that the SMR provides free consultancy for the organisation. Another Authority suggested that the FP enables the partners to maintain their integrity.

The Organisations

One organisation and the Trade Associations have had no experience of the SMR approach and were therefore unable to comment. The remainder suggested that the two approaches can achieve the same goals. Three organisations suggested that SMRs are unnecessary or over complicated. The reduced resources required for the Flexible approach is an obvious benefit.

Best Value

The Lead Authorities were asked to consider the relationship between Best Value and LAPS and to identify potential conflict. Environmental Health Departments have not yet been through the Best Value process and so the understanding of the topic was limited. Views as to the degree conflict between the two schemes were mixed. The comments are summarised in table 15.

Table 15 Lead Authority views on potential conflict between LAPS and Best Value

View	No. of responses	Comments
No conflict	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Enforcement mix important● Demonstrates continuous improvement● Principles transferable
Conflict exists	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Local versus national performance● Could lead to charging
Unsure	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Value to clients versus improving professionalism● Not many local benefits

Summary views of the partnerships

The participants were asked to summarise their views of LAPS in one sentence. The responses are presented overleaf:

Lead Authorities

- Potential benefits have not been fully achieved.
- Flexible partnerships give Local Authorities that do not have a great deal of resource, the opportunity to form a partnership.
- A positive arrangement which promotes good communication and better enforcement.
- A worthwhile venture to see the other side of health and safety and to give a point of contact for a consistent approach.
- Other Local Authorities should use the scheme more.
- A way of continuing to encourage companies that already have a high standard of health & safety.
- Based on personal experience, the scheme has the potential to achieve the goals of improving consistency and improving the health and safety performance in the company.
- Provides an approach that can improve the safety culture of an organisation.
- A positive experience with a positive outcome (TAP).
- Well worth the effort (TAP).

Organisations

- A working partnership that has proved to be reasonable successful.
- Slow to get going but now helpful and productive.
- A useful working partnership that has helped the company in the development of practice and procedures.
- The benefits reflect the resources put into the scheme.
- A good concept but there is still a distance to go in order to maximise value.
- LAPS are a vital ingredient in the progressive management of health and safety in the modern world.
- There has been initial progress, but there is still plenty to do.
- Both parties can learn each other
- Successful so far but clear objectives still need to be addressed (TAP).
- The partnership is working well and producing real advantages, but more work is needed to make it really effective (TAP).

Influence of the benchmark interviews on the work of the partnership

It was important to establish if the initial research had influenced the subsequent development and activity of the partnership. All those who were interviewed for the benchmark evaluation were asked to consider this. Responses from both Lead Authorities and Organisations demonstrate that there was very little affect. The results are summarised in table 16.

Table 16 Partners views on the influence of the benchmark interviews

Comment	No. of responses
No influence	11
Could not remember	3
Already had a plan	2
Helped clarify ideas	2
Prompted the LEA to record no of liaison contacts	1

Additional comments included useful for information, gave insight to the bigger picture and demonstrates the importance of the scheme.

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION

The overall picture is very positive. The majority of partners have developed a good working relationship that benefits both the organisation and the Lead Authority. One less successful partnership demonstrates potential pitfalls of the Partnership approach and the importance of ensuring that the senior managers of the organisation are totally committed to the scheme. (This is in common with the SMR approach).

Some interesting trends have emerged from this project which are important in terms of the development of the scheme. These are discussed in relation to the Flexible Partnerships and Trade Association Partnerships. The discussion is focused on motivation and barriers of participation and practical aspects of establishing and maintaining the partnership.

Motivation and barriers of participation

The key motivators, that have been drawn from views on aims, benefits and barriers, continue to reflect the initial aims of the scheme – improved consistency of enforcement and improved health and safety performance in the organisation. However, it is unclear if improved consistency of enforcement is being achieved. Many partners have expressed doubts about this, whilst some companies suggest it was never an issue. In addition poor level of liaison was described as a barrier to the success of the scheme. This view is further reinforced when detailed questioning on liaison demonstrates that:

- Amount of liaison is variable and ranges from 0-15 queries per year; and
- Organisations have mixed experiences on improved consistency.

This seems to be a significant issue. Some suggestions for addressing the problem are outlined in the recommendations.

The other key motivator is the improved health and safety performance in the organisation. This has become a more important aim than was anticipated in the initial benchmark study. There are many practical examples of improvements made by direct intervention, usually in the smaller organisations. The larger organisations have achieved improvement through support for the health and safety professional (in terms of reassurance and confirmation of opinions). The contribution to continuous improvement is acknowledged. Although the absence of qualitative measurement has been highlighted.

Although the resources are greatly reduced compared with SMR based partnerships (see Project report 4093/R68.053) the Lead Authorities are using far more resources for partnership work than the organisations, particularly as many organisations suggested much of the work would have been carried out in any case. These figures may simply reflect a different culture in Lead Authorities from organisations in the way resources are allocated. However it is clear that there is a greater commitment required from the Lead Authorities. We therefore have to look to the other benefits to understand their motivation for participation (above and beyond improving the organisation health and safety performance). Two benefits emerge which are related to the political climate and personal development.

Kudos is a theme that has run through both the aims and benefits described by Lead Authorities. Partnership may be becoming 'fashionable' in a political sense. As a result partnerships with

Trade Associations, Charities, Good Quality Organisations and Local Organisations may be perceived as desirable. The relevance of Best Value and the enforcement mix to this argument is unclear but may be important.

At a personal level the benefits are based around job enrichment and personal development. The amount of work done on the partnership to some extent appears to be at the discretion of the Lead Officer (this may reflect their own personal drivers, their relationship with their partner as well as constraints within their Authority).

Resource limitations in the Lead Authority have been identified as a key barrier and the reason why some partnerships have not achieved as much as originally planned. This could lead to frustration for the organisation who may wish to achieve more. In addition there has been reduced opportunity to transfer experiences gained by the Lead Officer with other staff in the Lead Authority. With a low number of liaison queries the effort and expertise of the Lead Authority is not being maximised. A converse argument could be that level of liaison is such that a detailed SMR is not necessary.

Practical steps

Data presented in Chapter 2 illustrates that the Flexible Partnerships have developed in similar ways. Diagram 1, on the following page, presents a representation of this.

There is some variation on making follow-up visits to outlets. The range of approaches has arisen for a variety of reasons, but the resource constraints (and commitment) of the Lead Officer may be significant. Feedback is usually provided in an informal way. This reflects the desire to minimise resources used and paperwork and to keep to the principle of flexibility. It is also significant to note that decision making does not usually involve more senior managers because frequently the Health and Safety professionals are empowered to make the changes and possibly because suggestions from the Lead Authority requiring significant expenditure by the organisation are uncommon.

Trade Association Partnerships

Although the previous discussion is equally relevant to TAPs, it is important to note that consistency of enforcement has been addressed through the production of industry standards and guidance that will be used by both member organisations and the enforcing authorities. The enforcing authorities involved in the NASS partnership are at present devising training courses for inspectors based on the guidance. A major concern in these partnerships may well become the degree of compliance with the guidance within member organisations, particularly SMEs. A natural extension of these partnerships might be the development of audits to address this issue.

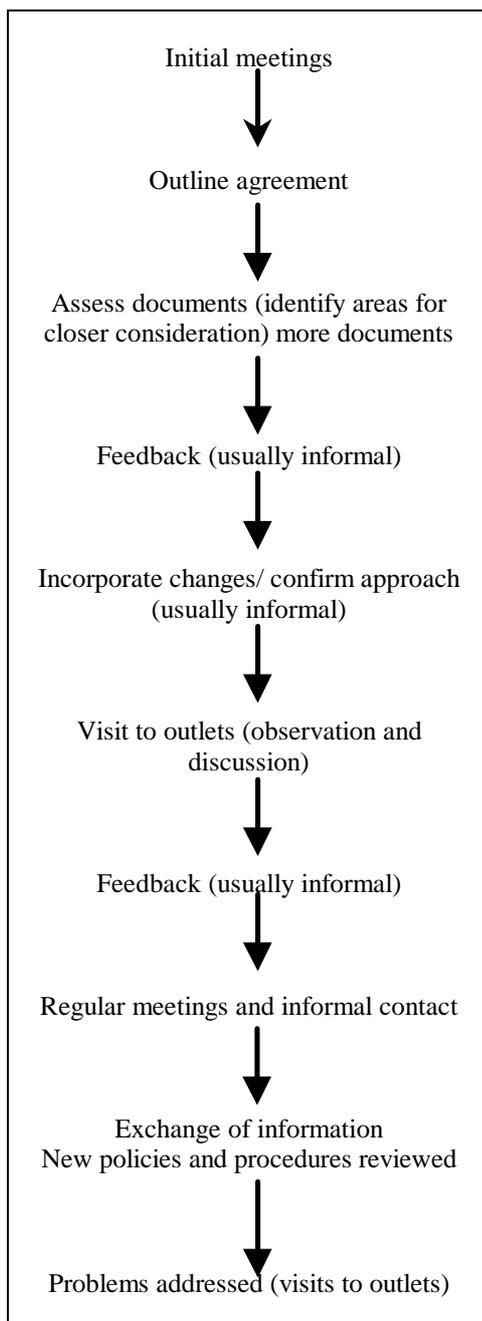


Diagram 1 Outline of possible steps in establishing and maintaining a FP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The way forward

It is suggested that a strategy for developing the scheme could address the following issues:

1. Providing additional information for existing partnerships;
2. Increasing the amount of liaison; and
3. Encouraging the development of further partnerships.

Many of the activities described below would address more than one issue.

Providing additional information/support for existing partnerships

The information provided by LAU for new partnerships could be enhanced with the following:

- Development of a partnership web site. This should be organised and maintained by the LAU.
- Development of up date seminars on LAPS. Again these should be organised by the LAU.
- In addition to the model agreement some notes on the potential pitfalls of establishing a partnership could be useful, particularly for Lead Authorities working with SMEs.
- Publish case studies of existing partnerships could also provide a useful starting point for a new partnership.

Increasing the amount of liaison

The web site would ensure that knowledge of partnerships is widely accessible. However this could be supplemented by:

- A continued profile of the scheme in Local Authority publicity.
- Ensuring that FPs are considered having equal status to SMR based partnerships. There has been a concern that some of the existing SMR based partnerships feel that the FP are downgraded.
- Publishing guidance on the liaison process (where, when and how) so that EHOs appreciate when it is appropriate to contact a Lead Authority.

Encouraging the development of further partnerships

- Maintaining the profile of the scheme in Local Authority publicity. The aspect of partnership and personal benefits could be emphasised.
- Develop sector specific publicity to encourage companies and Trade Associations to participate.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire – Local Authority

Section A Demographic details	Date
Date of previous interview:	
Authority Name:	Tel no.
These initial questions will be completed by CHaRM with details from previous interview	
Partner organisation:	
Contact Name	
Job Title	
Have there been any changes in staff/ partners/ arrangements since the initial interview?	
New question	

Part B About the FP/TAPS
Having been involved in the partnership for a year what do you feel is the aim of the FP/TAP?
(compare with original comments for same question)
What areas of the work activity have you included in the partnership?
(compare with original comments for same question)
Can you describe the practical steps taken to enable you to learn how the company manages health and safety (be competent to be a Lead Authority)
(Compare with two questions on initial interview 'What practical actions do you plan to take' and 'Has any partnership work taken place yet')
Do you feel you have a good understanding of how the company manages health and safety?
Have you changed your strategy on the practical steps from your initial plan? How? Why?

Have you identified any benefits from participation in the scheme and what will the benefits be for yourself, your Authority, your partner organisation, other LAs, others?

(compare with original comments for same question)

Have you identified any difficulties or barriers in participating in the scheme, for yourself, with your Authority, within the partner organisation, other LAs, others.

(compare with original comments for same question)

Please estimate the resources (money and time) involved in the development of the partnership? And any on-going cost?

What are your future plans for the partnership? E.g. more of the same, extend work activities included, carry out more formal audit

Part C Routine activity since initial development work

How do you maintain the partnership on a routine basis e.g. meetings, topics covered, information exchanged, who is proactive?

What is the amount and type of liaison between other LAs and you as Lead Authority?

Does more liaison need to be encouraged? If yes have you any suggestions how?

Do LACs have a role?

Part D Measure of Success**How do you measure success of the partnership?**

(compare with original comments on similar question)

If you do not, does it matter?**Did the questions asked in the initial interview cause you to consider measuring performance or any other aspect of how the partnership developed?****Part E About LAU and future developments****In establishing your partnership would you have liked more guidance and/or a more well defined framework?****How should the LAU take the scheme forward to ensure success? E.g.**

- Reform the User Groups;
- Develop a Website of partnerships that can be easily accessed and updated;
- Amend the SMR training to develop a course more appropriate for FPs;
- Combine with the Home Authority Scheme.

Having participated in a FP are you now more enthusiastic about LAPS? Would you be willing to set-up other partnerships? Do you contact other LEA when appropriate?**Based on your experience do you think that the Flexible Partnership approach is viable as a national scheme? Please explain your views****How does the Flexible approach compare with the approached based on the full SMR? Do you think the two approaches can achieve the same goals?****What is the relationship between 'Best Value' and LAPS? Is there any conflict between the two?****Can you summarise your views of LAPS (or is it FP?) in one short sentence?**

Questionnaire – Company and Trade Association

Section A Demographic details	Date
Date of previous interview:	
Company Name:	Tel no.
Partner organisation:	
Contact Name	
Job Title	
Have there been any changes in staff/ partners/ arrangements since the initial interview?	

Part B About the FP/TAPS
Having been involved in the partnership for a year what do you feel is the aim of the FP/TAP?
(compare with original comments for same question)
What areas of the work activity have you included in the partnership?
(compare with original comments for same question)
Can you describe the practical steps taken to enable the LEA to learn how the company manages health and safety (be competent to be a Lead Authority)
(Compare with two questions on initial interview 'What practical actions do you plan to take' and 'Has any partnership work taken place yet')
Have you changed your strategy on the practical steps from your initial plan? How? Why?

Have you identified any benefits from participation in the scheme and what will the benefits be for yourself, your company, your partner Authority, other LAs, others?

(compare with original comments for same question)

Have you identified any difficulties or barriers in participating in the scheme, for yourself, with your company, within the partner Authority, other LAs, others.

(compare with original comments for same question)

Please estimate the resources (money and time) involved in the development of the partnership? And any on-going cost?

What are your future plans for the partnership? E.g. more of the same, extend work activities included, carry out more formal audit

Part C Routine activity since initial development

How do you maintain the partnership on a routine basis e.g. meetings, topics covered, information exchanged, who is proactive?

Are you aware of the amount of liaison that occurs between the LEA and other Authorities? Do you play a role in encouraging this?

Has there been an improvement in consistency of enforcement since the partnership started? How?

Has there been an improvement in your health and safety management system? What?

Part D Measure of Success**How do you measure success of the partnership?**

(compare with original comments on similar question)

If you do not, does it matter?**Did the questions asked in the initial interview cause you to consider measuring performance or any other aspect of how the partnership developed?****Part E About LAU and future developments****In establishing your partnership would you have liked more guidance and/or a more well defined framework?****How should the LAU take the scheme forward to ensure success? E.g.**

- Reform the User Groups;
- Develop a Website of partnerships that can be accessed and updated easily;
- Amend the SMR training to develop a course more appropriate for FPs;
- Combine with the Home Authority Scheme.

Based on your experience do you think that the Flexible Partnership approach is viable as a national scheme? Please explain your views**How does the Flexible approach compare with the approached based on the full SMR? Do you think the two approaches can achieve the same goals?****Can you summarise your views of LAPS (or is it FP?) in one short sentence?**



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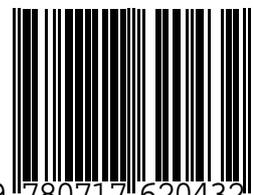
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