

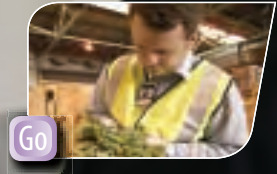


# REPORTER

The e-magazine of the UK Association of Chief Executives



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# REPORTER

The e-magazine of the UK Association of Chief Executives



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Sensitive agenda

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## Fostering closer collaboration

Sitting in an ACE Board meeting back in the summer I was struck by the increasing number of Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) that are working collaboratively to deliver public services within a tightening financial environment. The stories that follow highlight how some ACE members have responded to the challenges and opportunities of the spending cuts.

They include the Forestry Commission collaborating with the private sector, the National School of Government using the knowledge we have across Government to support staff through the challenges we face, National Savings & Investments working with the Ministry of Justice and Ulster Supported Employment Ltd partnering with Remploy to provide employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

Here at Cefas our response includes fostering a closer collaboration across the wider Defra network to deliver efficiencies through new ways of sharing evidence collection and delivery. Our innovative agreement with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee is a practical example of progress. Our partnership will enable cost savings and best use of

complementary capabilities in each organisation.

With the current financial difficulties putting increasing pressures on Government finances, ALBs are facing a re-evaluation of the role of Government in providing public services. Questions are being asked about whether we can provide our services more effectively and more efficiently. For some the questions are even tougher, and our forthcoming Annual Conference gives us the opportunity to discuss sensitive issues with our peers. I would encourage as many of you as possible to come along.

It is a great opportunity to hear from key people, to network, to share problems and frustrations, and to find a way through them. The world is changing rapidly. We need to change with it but we will only do that if we work together. Hope to see you at Conference



**Guest Editor**  
**Richard Judge**  
CEX Cefas & Interim  
CEX Rural Payments  
Agency

# Faster route for fresh produce

Importers of fresh produce and horticultural products now enjoy much faster import clearance times thanks to a new electronic system developed by a cross-government project. The system has reduced customs clearance times from around two hours to 10 – 20 minutes by removing the need for importers to fax documentation to HMRC or for manual document checks by Customs officers.

It is estimated to have achieved benefits of around £1.5 – £1.7 million a year to industry in reduced admin burden alone, with benefits to importers from reduced clearance time estimated to be around £50 - £100 million. Reduced clearance times ensure that traders can plan more accurately when vehicles can collect goods from transit sheds, reducing the risk of demurrage charges from port operators or late delivery charges from supermarkets.

The Automatic Licence Verification System (ALVS) has come from the International Trade Single Window (ITSW) project. The project, led by Business Link, HMRC and Defra, with input from BIS, SITPRO, the Food Standards Agency and UK Trade and Investment, aims to provide a web portal that brings together information on importing and exporting from all relevant Government agencies, enabling traders to comply with Government regulations more easily.

It provides an electronic link between

HMRC and Defra import systems for plants, flowers, seeds, planting materials, fruit and vegetables, soil and grain, imports of which are regulated by Fera's Plant Health and Seeds Inspectors (PHSI) and the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate (HMI).

The PHSI monitor these commodities when they are imported and traded within the UK to ensure they are free from quarantine pests and diseases (harmful plant pests and diseases most of which are not established in this country). HMI Inspectors are responsible for monitoring the quality and labelling standards, set by the EU, for certain fruits, vegetables and salads. HMI Inspectors also monitor this subset of produce for quarantine pests and disease on behalf of the PHSI.

Key challenges included bringing together the business processes and IT systems of the two Inspectorates, working across two Government Departments (Defra and HMRC) to form a robust, accurate system for 24/7 operation, and delivering a new concept of electronic control to an initially sceptical industry.

By engaging in a constructive working relationship with the existing IT suppliers before development started, potential IT issues were identified and resolved at an early stage. The industry was kept informed of progress and

were specifically engaged in discussions about how the system should be rolled out, which involved starting with a single trader and only adding more once there was confidence that the system was working properly.

The phased roll-out and early stakeholder engagement was key to the overall success in delivering an IT system that the industry praise and have confidence in. HM Freight Services stated 'We have found ALV to be exceptionally quick. At first we were dubious about its introduction but it has really speeded up the clearance times and also reduced our paperwork.'



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# Data goes green

Green data centres are becoming big business for the private and public sector alike. The Coal Authority might sign up as the first partner at the 'world's greenest' data centre. The Coal Authority and the Environment Agency, both Government NDPBs, have been working together under the Government directive of *collaborative procurement* for the provision of ICT services.

The project team at the Coal Authority spoke to more than 30 other Government departments before identifying the Environment Agency as the most suitable partner to join with in the procurement of ICT services.

Steve Pennell, Director of Information and Systems The Coal Authority, said: 'The synergies with the Environment Agency were compelling. They had recently awarded their new ICT services contract to Capgemini, also current supplier to the Coal Authority, and had at the same time extended the new contract to ensure the service could be reused by other Government and public sector bodies.

'Environmental considerations are at the core of the design of the service – from the production and transportation of hardware to energy savings for each end-user. In designing a framework with environmental measures built in from the outset, such as equipment purchase, its delivery and use on the desk,

through to its ultimate disposal, the total cost of IT purchase and operation should be reduced.'

The services contract is specifically structured to give transparent unit pricing for support of commodity items. To make this work there are key transformation activities that align any additional third-party authorities with the Environment Agency contract model. These transformation activities give a standard shared Windows 7 desktop environment, promote the use of Ultra-thin clients and transform the backend infrastructure, such as servers and storage.

The contract is the greenest of its kind in Government. To support this and the Environment Agency's sustainability targets, Capgemini has built innovative modular data centres to house the servers and other hosted infrastructure. The data centre is billed as the 'world's greenest' data centre. Its Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) rating is billed as 1.08, meaning it uses much less than half as much energy per square foot as the industry average PUE of about 2.5.

To produce these figures and keep high availability (certified at 99.982%), Capgemini has implemented many technologies such as adiabatic cooling (designed to reduce cooling energy requirement by 92%), flywheel UPS systems and three backup generators per data

centre. The two data centres are based 15 miles apart and connected by dark fibre so that services provided are mirrored, load-balanced and give built-in Disaster Recovery capability. The Coal Authority is currently considering joining up as the first partner. It is working with the Environment Agency and Capgemini to identify the risks, benefits and of course the costs. The Environment Agency is still doing its own transformation and the Coal Authority is less than 12 months away from delivering its new main business application. Pennell said: 'Times promise to be busy for all. But with this spirit of collaboration between organisations, the outcome is sure to be a sound strategy.'

Environmental considerations are at the core of the design of the service – from the production and transportation of hardware to energy savings for each end-user

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# Brighter job prospects

Job prospects for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland are looking better, thanks to an alliance between Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL) with Remploy, one of the UK's leading providers of employment services to people with disabilities.

This alliance will provide USEL with access to Remploy's links with UK employers to develop local agreements on the recruitment of people with disabilities and health related conditions.

Poundland is one organisation that, following its success with placing clients in stores across England through Remploy, was keen to provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities within their Northern Ireland branches.

To date, Poundland has provided placement and paid employment opportunities to USEL clients. Promotion opportunities are also available as one client was able to considerably progress from sales assistant to supervisor of one of the local stores.

On the back of this success, Remploy has provided USEL with access to the Royal Mail, which is also keen to provide placement and paid employment opportunities to USEL's Northern Ireland clients.



This is a win-win relationship for all parties. Through this collaboration we are able to match local unemployed clients with vacancies within a wide network of national organisations with a presence across Northern Ireland - *Humphries*

Jenny Johnstone, USEL's Employment Services Manager, said: 'This partnership saves significant time and resources for USEL as the relationship with these employers has already been developed by Remploy.'

Sam Humphries, USEL Chief Executive, added: 'This is a win-win relationship for all parties. Through this collaboration we are able to match local unemployed clients with vacancies within a wide network of national organisations with a presence across Northern Ireland. We are not only able to answer the recruitment needs of employers but also significantly improve the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities and health related conditions.'

■ Find out more at: [www.usel.co.uk](http://www.usel.co.uk)

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# Branching out to save money



In the 11 years since National Savings & Investments (NS&I) outsourced its back office operations to Siemens, the organisation has proven itself to be a robust provider of modern banking services. Over that time, NS&I has developed its systems to the extent that it can achieve much more with its banking infrastructure.

That is why NS&I's strategy now includes the goal of leveraging its own areas of expertise to share the benefits with other areas of government. The Financial Services Bill 2010 provides one such example, enabling NS&I to work with the Court Funds Office to investigate ways of modernising their back office

operations, with the intention of producing effective services with considerable savings for government.

This development in the scope of NS&I's activity is very much in line with the findings of the 2004 Gershon Review. In his report *Releasing Resources to the Front Line*, Sir Peter Gershon specifically identified such standardisation of transactional services across government as a prime area for efficiency gain. As such, the work underway with NS&I to modernise Court Funds Office functions, (which is still subject to final government approval) is designed to deliver a much more efficient use of public sector resource.

It also ensures the management of court funds remains within government. This is seen as a particularly important reassurance for the Court's clients, namely children and vulnerable adults under the care of the Court of Protection.

The intended benefit of this work is clear. The required service can be delivered at both reduced administrative cost and with increased resilience through the more robust IT infrastructure used by NS&I. NS&I is now looking at other possible areas within government where it may be able to utilise its unique transaction processing expertise to deliver pan-government efficiency savings.

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## Tracking claims

Research to track the detailed journeys of customers claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is being carried out by the Customer Insight Team of the Pension Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) as part of their focus over the next 12 months and beyond on cost reduction through more efficient customer management and service.

The work will span both the external journey to PDCS through partner organisations and the internal journey that will measure customer contacts, customer experience, internal processing, cumulative cost and, finally,

compliance with decision making guidance.

Roger Westerbeek, Head of Insight and Measurement, Customer and Partnerships Directorate, PDCS, said: 'The research will provide an insight into complex DLA cases and will, for the first time, allow us to firmly connect good customer experience with lower internal expenditure. The aim then will be to work closely with our Customer Strategy and Learn teams to adapt our business delivery model for the benefit of customers and our organisation.

'Detailed knowledge of the customer and the way we deliver our services is the key to

developing a strong strategy for PDCS in the future. We have to adapt the way we produce customer insight to reflect difficult financial constraints, something challenging but, indeed, possible if you are innovative and resourceful as a team.'

The research will be collaborative, involving PDCS Finance, PDCS Strategy and PDCS Operations, together with HMRC. It is being undertaken internally, for the first time, which represents a significant saving to the department but provides the cutting-edge information needed to improve in the future.

# Sensitive agenda for Conference

Policy, plans and practical issues for Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) will be at the centre of ACE Conference in November, which this year, given the sensitive nature of the agenda, will not be sponsored externally.

ACE chair Jane Platt, CEX National Savings and Investment, said that Board had decided that in the current climate and particularly given the confidential nature of ACE discussions, it would not be appropriate for the Conference to be sponsored.

She said: 'ACE finances are such that the Conference can go ahead exactly as planned. ACE will make a small loss but it will be well covered by reserves. We will raise this issue at the AGM so the Board can hear the views of ACE members.'

The value of ACE membership, said Platt, is that it allows members the opportunity to have private discussions with key people. A recent workshop hosted by the Cabinet Office gave members real insights into ALB-related initiatives.

Dusty Amroliwala had explained the progress to date on amending the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS) and how the discussions with stakeholders were developing, the likely mitigations, out-turns and timing. As always, said Platt, this was a private event and it would be inappropriate to give any details.

However, he did make two important points:

- If ALBs wish to make workforce change and have the plans and funding, there is nothing to stop them proceeding – his team are approving a number of such plans every day.
- If ALBs would like to discuss their plans or thoughts, they should contact: Mike.Watkins@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk at the Cabinet Office.

ALB Bill Manager Paula Macdonald had explained the process and timing for putting together the enabling legislation to allow changes to ALBs to take place. She said she was interested in further engagement with ACE. The Board will follow this up, said Platt.

She said: 'Paula stayed to hear the two final presentations when Alexis Cleveland, Director General Cabinet Office, explained how she had restructured the Benefits Agency and the key learnings, and Sandra Verkuyten, the former CEO of the Hearing Aid Council, told us about the 10 lessons learnt from closing down the Council.

'It was clearly a great benefit to all parties to share the policy and implementation issues surrounding major change and it was clear from the questions that we could have spent a lot more time on all of the issues. So we are building these topics into the conference programme.'

Another successful event was the ACE discussion forum with Robert Devereux, Permanent Secretary DfT, and Benn Jupp from the Cabinet Office. Members were updated on the approach to ALB assessment, funding and restructuring being taken centrally and in departments. Platt said: 'There was a good Q&A session where members had the chance to explore both policy and practical issues.'

- ACE Annual Conference will be held at the National School of Government, Ascot from 25-26 November. To find out more or to book your place visit: <https://secure.solace.org.uk/ace/conference2010>



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# Pushing ahead with partnerships

## Network of joint ventures leads to success

Public sector businesses must embrace joint ventures. Productive partnerships are the foundation for long-term success. This is the ethos at Cefas (the Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science) which has established several partnership frameworks.

Cefas, which prides itself on being the Government's foremost source of marine evidence and impartial expert advice, was quick to realise the potential advantages of partnerships in meeting the demanding requirements of emerging multiple policy frameworks.

Stuart Rogers, Divisional Director of Cefas' Environment and Ecosystems division, said: 'Monitoring the marine environment in partnership enables a better understanding of how different species interact and how they are impacted by human activities. This knowledge also allows us to better identify and respond to potential threats.'

One such partnership is between Cefas and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The two organisations have recently joined forces to develop an integrated marine survey and assessment programme. The new alliance recognises the increasing demands on the marine environment and addresses the need for conservation and marine planning highlighted in the Marine and Coastal Access Act.

Both organisations have always had the potential to work together. Cefas, with its uniquely comprehensive multi-disciplinary capabilities related to the marine environment and a distinctive focus on policy and societal outcomes, and the JNCC, an NDPB with an executive arm responsible for biodiversity and nature conservation in the offshore marine environment.

A demonstration of their joint working agreement saw Cefas and JNCC work together in a national programme of conservation site designation in UK offshore waters. They undertook a detailed survey of the Dogger Bank, a large sandbank in the North Sea. Detailed acoustic data was collected, describing seabed habitats and geography, alongside biological sampling of local species.

The survey demonstrated how Cefas' offshore data and evidence collection capability complemented JNCC's statutory obligation to select sites for conservation. Rogers said: 'Developing solutions to enable efficient joint working was an important step. Ensuring that staff thought about partnership working has resulted in the development of excellent relationships.'

A second joint research cruise to Haig Fras, a Special Area of Conservation off the south-west UK coast, is planned for January 2011. Cefas



Working together: Scientists sieve grab samples on board the RV Cefas Endeavour

Pic taken by Neel Golding/JNCC

and JNCC staff will again work together to assess biodiversity, benthic (bottom-dwelling) species and other environmental variables in areas subject to different human-induced pressures. As well as being cost efficient, says Rogers, this integrated approach generates information required for several policy frameworks.

Steve Gibson, Programme Leader for Marine Monitoring at JNCC, said: 'The final outcome of the survey and the work of both

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organisations benefit from working alongside each other, bringing our complementary expertise together from project inception through to delivery in a way that would not be possible except through partnership.'

This collaborative approach has also seen Cefas develop a partnership with Natural England, the Government's independent adviser on the natural environment on land and for English inshore waters between 0 -12 nautical miles. The two organisations have recently entered into a working agreement, with the objective of saving resources and making better use of evidence to support advice.

Sian Limpenny, a Cefas Environment and Ecosystems Group Manager who helped draw up the framework for the alliance, said: 'Both Natural England and Cefas recognise the benefits of integrating inshore monitoring programmes and joint research and development projects. The inshore work will be done in partnership with Natural England but some components are sufficiently offshore to warrant a research vessel of Cefas' *Endeavour's* capabilities – and will be done with the JNCC. We've already delivered our first survey programme, at the offshore region of the Lizard Point and Capebank potential Special Areas of Conservation.'

Another long-standing and successful Cefas partnership has been with the University of East Anglia (UEA). Supported by William Cheung, a joint UEA-Cefas lecturer in marine ecosystem services (services provided by the natural environment that benefit people), the alliance has already delivered successful studentship applications and joint projects on marine ecosystems, pollution, fisheries, climate change and oceanography.



Formal signing of the Cefas/Natural England partnership agreement: Mike Waldock (Cefas Chief Scientist), Sian Limpenny, James Marsden (NE Marine Director) and Gavin Black.

Cheung said: 'The Cefas-UEA partnership has been extremely successful as the strongly applied nature of Cefas' work and the academic research at UEA are highly complementary. Several exciting ideas, collaborative projects, together with teaching and training programmes have been developed. It has been an amazing experience.'

By pooling intellectual and technical resources, Cefas and the UEA have seamlessly linked scientific innovation to application. It has provided mutual benefits that include the more efficient use of data and research vessel time, a shared understanding of policy drivers and research needs, increased access to funding and a capacity to develop social and economic science to meet new demands for marine environment management.

## Cefas tips for a successful partnership

- Behave fairly and reasonably in a spirit of mutual co-operation
- Be open and honest
- Demonstrate mutual respect and value each other's contribution
- Encourage innovation and continuous improvement

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# Bringing the forests alive

Simon Hodgson looks at why 40 million people go down to the woods

The Forestry Commission is the most extensive and popular resource for recreation in the countryside, with over 40 million visits per year. But that couldn't have been achieved without its many and varied key business partnerships that rise to more than a thousand in all.

They include Go Ape, Forest Holidays and catering companies who use its sites as a base for their own business. Simon Hodgson, chief executive Forestry Commission England, said: 'We host a large number of cycling trails and events, suitable for a range of abilities, with bike hire available on most major sites and our annual live music programme proving extremely popular with over 100,000 concert goers each year.'

The Forestry Commission is a major supporter of small/medium businesses (SMEs) in rural areas. Some 70% of its operations is delivered by around 1,000 private sector forestry, leisure and related businesses and there are around 3,000 people employed by SMEs in delivering forestry and leisure programmes on its estate.

Hodgson said: 'At the Forestry Commission our goal is always to ensure that Britain uses its forests to contribute to as many of the nation's needs as we can, while sustaining this great resource for the future.'



Stepping out in the woods

Moving forward, there will clearly be different challenges to address and the needs of the society are changing.

'We want to improve the quality of life in our urban communities and, of course, to sustain development in a global environment with an uncertain future. Our focus is towards

mitigating and adapting to climate change and protecting our natural resources.'

Forestry Commission responsibilities span research, commercial timber production, sustainability programmes and policy, as well

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as learning and leisure. Its partners range from private sector landowners to sports clubs, from local communities to national businesses, on a whole host of recreation, regeneration and educational schemes.

Hodgson said: 'We are pleased to be seen as a world leader in sustainable forest management. The Forestry Commission estate plays a key role in supporting the development

of competitive forestry and the wood products industry and ensuring forestry activities deliver a wide range of public goods. Our woodland is independently certified as sustainably managed by the Forestry Stewardship Council.

'Going back to the heart of our organisation, the Forestry Commission is still the largest producer of timber, at 1.4 million tonnes per annum, with around 60% of the

total production in England. The home-grown timber processing industry, which has seen capital investment of over £1 billion, is underpinned by the estate and provides 60% of all wood supply.'

The aim of the Forestry Commission is to deliver agreed targets for environmental and social services on the estate at the lowest cost through taking a business-like approach. More than 70% of work on the Forestry Commission estate is done by private sector contractors.

Hodgson said: 'We are committed to providing long-term stable supplies in line with published forecasts. This has enabled skills to be retained in the sector and significant private investment to be secured in wood processing despite a major downturn in prices over the last decade. The research and investment that we carry out is vital for the sustainability of the industry as a whole, including the private sector.'

The Forestry Commission is looking at different ways of working to reduce net operating costs. Key factors in its policy include continuous benchmarking and market testing, public-private partnerships and exploring development opportunities on the estate.



Exploring the woods

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# Tackling fraud

Most fraud is in the public sector. Scheme aims to save £6 billion

Government departments working in partnership with the private sector are aiming to save the Government £6 billion by tackling fraud in the public sector. The largest proportion of the UK's fraud loss occurs in the public sector and the National Fraud Authority (NFA) has made tackling this loss a main priority.

Working across Government and with the private sector, the NFA has set up a team to deliver 15 initiatives tackling key aspects of public sector fraud. These include managing access to online public services, better use of information to identify citizens, and verification of circumstances to prevent false claims for benefits or exemptions.

The NFA, part of the Attorney General's Office, is a 'natural choice' to lead the programme, said NFA CEX Dr Bernard Herdan. He said: 'The NFA leads and co-ordinates projects with tangible, measurable outcomes that strengthen the UK's response to fraud. It is within this context that it was the natural choice to lead the response to the public sector fraud element of the Smarter Government White Paper published late last year.'

An NFA report, produced in partnership with DWP, HMRC, local authorities and the NHS, entitled *A Fresh Approach to Combating Fraud in*



Working across Government and with the private sector, the NFA has set up a team to deliver 15 initiatives tackling key aspects of public sector fraud. These include managing access to online public services, better use of information to identify citizens, and verification of circumstances to prevent false claims for benefits or exemptions - Herdan

*the Public Sector*, increases the NFA's first estimate of fraud in the public sector from £17.5 billion (calculated on 2008 figures) to more than £25 billion.

As a result, the NFA has identified 15 initiatives to focus on. All 15 have been designed to cut across key fraud risks in central and local government. It is estimated the success of this work will save the Government approximately £6 billion.

Some initiatives will be of particular interest to local authority chief executives and audit committees. These include work streams looking at procurement fraud, grants fraud, staff and insider-enabled fraud, council tax

fraud and housing tenancy fraud. The Audit Commission estimates that up to 50,000 properties may be unlawfully sublet and that up to £92million may be lost to Single Persons discount fraud.

The projects on Housing Tenancy Fraud and Single Persons Discount Fraud are well underway. The NFA has set up pathfinders with the London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Brighton & Hove Council. These councils are undertaking pro-active work in this area and reporting back on what works best.

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# Tackling fraud

The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) distributed funding to help housing providers tackle tenancy fraud and the NFA work is complementary to this. The NFA is also working with the Chartered Institute of Housing and the DCLG on Housing Tenancy fraud issues and has run three workshops for local authorities and housing providers to exchange good practice.

The NFA has also been working with the Local Government Association and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships to negotiate a framework contract for the use of credit reference agencies to get local authorities a better deal, if using these for investigative work.

Although there is much work to be done to reduce the effect of fraud on the public purse, good practice already exists within the sector. The reduction of fraud in relation to tax credits and benefits are just two examples of Government departments, working in partnership with the private sector, successfully applying fraud prevention methods and reducing loss. The team aims to mirror this good work across all 15 initiatives.

## The 15 initiatives are:

1. Managing access to online public services, including ID authentication
2. Better use of information assets to verify the identity of citizens
3. Verification of circumstances to prevent false claims for benefits/exemptions
4. Fraud policy development, including designing out fraud
5. Housing tenancy and council tax single person discount fraud
6. Regional counter fraud partnerships
7. Fraud intelligence sharing, specifically through NFIB
8. Using data analytics to identify fraud
9. Procurement fraud
10. Fraud in grant awarding
11. Staff and insider-enabled fraud
12. Identity crime
13. Preventing the use of false accommodation addresses to obtain public services/benefits
14. Better fraud measurement in the public sector
15. Asset recovery



The Audit Commission estimates that up to 50,000 properties may be unlawfully sublet and that up to £92million may be lost to Single Persons discount fraud

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# Just tell us once!

Collaboration turned out to be easier done than said, says Terry Moran

A few years ago, if I were asked how I could get four major central government departments and the whole of local government to make it easier for citizens to tell them about changes – while at the same time increasing efficiency – I might have said it couldn't be done.

Looking back, I think that may have been because the question was how I would do it – that's 'I' in the singular. At that time we did not routinely involve citizens and other users in the design and delivery of new services. The Tell Us Once service has begun to change that.

The service, led by DWP's Tell Us Once programme, works in partnership across government to enable citizens to inform government just once of a change in their circumstances, such as a birth or death – changes that can directly impact on their ability to manage their affairs and their entitlement to a whole range of benefits and services.

Tell Us Once is delivered locally and face-to-face at participating local authorities or can be accessed over the phone. An important strategic development will be an online service to be established next year. Up to 24 benefits and services administered by five areas of government (DWP, HMRC, the relevant local authority, Identity and Passport Office and



Perhaps the most subtle evidence of the power of collaboration can be seen in the fact that, when Tell Us Once has been rolled out nationally, you will not see its name as a branded service on your high street - Moran

DVLA) are currently covered. And that coverage is increasing as the programme works with existing and new partners to develop new services, such as a Change of Address function.

Given the prevailing mindset, the range of partners involved, the diverse business priorities and tough fiscal environment, you might be forgiven for dismissing the chances of such a service ever seeing the light of day. However, almost 25,000 people have already used it successfully.

This has resulted in a better customer experience and business benefits that mean the tax payer is getting a better deal – to the tune of over £250million over 10 years. But although central government set up the programme with an initial £13million investment followed by a further cash injection

this year to cover the implementation costs, the expectation is that the vast majority of cash benefits in the business case will fall to the local government sector.

The reasons for success so far are twofold. First, a strong commitment to placing the citizen and tax payer at the centre of everything the programme does; and second, using that commitment to demonstrate where seemingly unrelated organisations actually do have a shared aim.

From the outset the programme saw strong collaboration as the key:

- In our development phase we listened to customers' suggestions for how the service could improve

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# Just tell us once!

- Our governance structures reflected the equal interest of all partners in a successful outcome
- We worked closely with key organisations across the local government and third sectors
- We encouraged each partner organisation, especially those in local government, to work through a shared ownership of problems, solutions and service ethos

It is that strong relationship and visible contribution of local government, supported by a very clear and simple service proposition, that has resulted in the vast majority of authorities agreeing to offer the service voluntarily rather than relying on the more familiar approach of mandating it from Whitehall.

Without this level of joint working, I have no doubt that a programme of this complexity would have failed. The old default approach of central government command and control would not have worked and we would not have been able to release the potential for further change that flows from joint working to solve what is a shared problem.

Perhaps the most subtle evidence of the power of collaboration can be seen in the fact that, when Tell Us Once has been rolled out nationally, you will not see its name as a branded service on your high street. Rather, I

want Tell Us Once to be a service that will continue to evolve through collaboration across government and the third sector so that it is adapted and integrated into existing services by those who need to deliver it for the benefit of customers and tax payers.

The old default approach of central government command and control would not have worked

For me, partnership and joint working has been the single most important reason why Tell Us Once is a success. We have learned a lot. It has not been without angst and frustration, but it has been worth it.

- Terry Moran is CEX Pension, Disability & Carers Service

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# Leaders should ask questions

## There is a need to keep staff engaged

Leaders who ask questions rather than leaders who tell people what to do are more likely to be successful in today's cash-strapped public sector. This is one of the themes to emerge from the learning being shared in a series of workshops being run by the National School of Government.

Since March, the National School has been running three workshops around the Government priority of *Achieving More with Less* and is now

about to launch a fourth on the theme of downsizing. Programme director James Pritchard said: 'Having run these workshops it is possible to identify three ways of working that really make a difference in ensuring an effective approach to achieving more with less.

'Firstly, we need to look at the system differently. Instead of working in straight lines we have to look at it from a different perspective.

This may be the perspective of customers or

clients or some other external view. We need to look at what it is we are trying to deliver.

'Secondly, our senior leaders need to engage people. There is an increasing issue that as times get tougher we have to find ways of keeping staff engaged. We also need to be able to engage with partner organisations by sharing a vision that is compelling with the people around them.

'Thirdly, there needs to be an attitude of enquiry. In complex systems, no one perspective has all the relevant information. If we are to lead effectively in this complex world, it requires new forms of leadership: more listening, less telling, more story-telling.

'One of the themes to emerge out of the workshops is that today's leaders will often



The National School of Government's stand at last year's ACE Conference



It was clear that people need support in dealing with issues of downsizing

- Pritchard

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need to use this attitude of enquiry rather than a more dogmatic, dictatorial approach.'

The three workshops the National School has been running for both senior people and practitioners have looked at achieving more for less from the perspectives of prioritising, partnerships and sourcing. Pritchard said: 'We have been trying to use the experience of best practice there is within the Civil Service and both the wider public sector and private sector to ensure we don't keep reinventing the wheel in different parts of government. We have used the workshops to identify the transferable lessons we can share.'

The new downsizing workshop that will roll out towards the end of October is a result of feedback from the workshops already running. It will provide a toolkit for leaders on how to downsize an organisation in a way that is sensitive to Civil Service values, respecting people while maximising value.

Pritchard said: 'It was clear that people need support in dealing with issues of downsizing. The workshop will look at both a practical roadmap of downsizing an organisation and coping with the challenging emotional landscape that leaders will face both personally and from others as they are downsizing.'

- To find out more about courses offered by the National School of Government visit: <http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/CSCLP/index.asp>



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- Pritchard

The National School of Government's learning centre

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# More about ACE

ACE is the UK Association of Chief Executives of Arm's Length Bodies. It is an inclusive organisation open to chief executives and senior managers who report to chief executives, working in central government Executive Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies, Non-Ministerial Departments and Trading Funds. Other chief executives of public sector organisations are able to apply for membership, but approval of membership will be subject to the agreement of the Board.

ACE promotes effective government and provides networking and learning opportunities for its members. ACE was formed in 2004 and exists to promote excellent working relationships throughout all aspects of government. It will seek, on an annual basis, to:

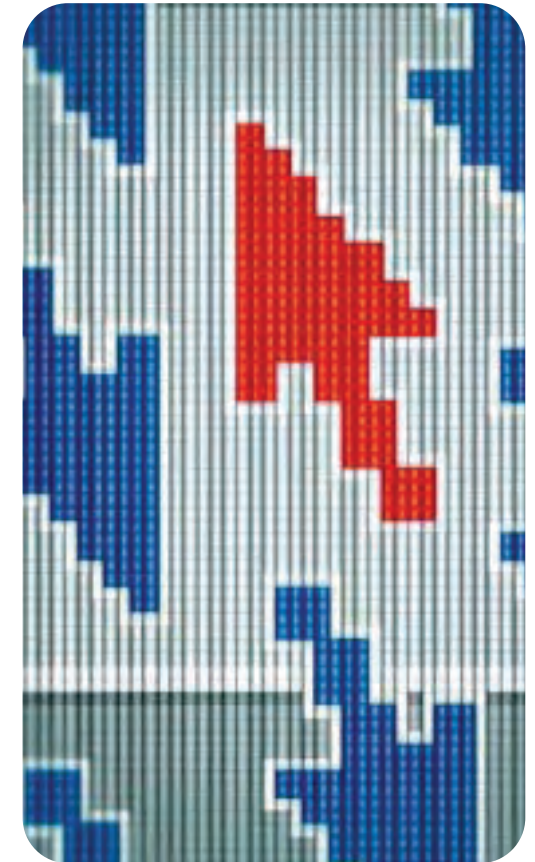
- Generate the opportunity for networking on the basis of an up-to-date database of contact details and specialisms
- Produce regular newsletters for the purpose of promoting and sharing good practice, experience and knowledge
- Organise an annual conference
- Organise two events which:
  - Highlight priority areas of action for government

- Offer specific opportunities for networking across the public and private sector
- Provide a point of contact between the Civil Service Steering Board (CSSB) and the Association and its members

In undertaking the above, ACE will neither seek to involve itself in policy development nor representative lobbying. Neither will ACE have the power to make decisions that would bind one, any or all, of the members. ACE is funded from member subscriptions.

The ACE London headquarters is located in the heart of Westminster and provides a range of facilities for members. This quiet and private location is ideal for relaxing, reading the current journals, meeting a colleague or simply having a cuppa. You can use the dedicated computer terminal to access the internet and read your emails.

- For a location map click here: [http://www.solace.org.uk/contact\\_hope\\_house.asp](http://www.solace.org.uk/contact_hope_house.asp)



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