

Total Place Pilots

A Briefing Paper



Introduction

1. This briefing draws together information about the Total Place pilots that have been announced in 13 areas of England¹. The pilots began in June 2009 and offer an opportunity for the FE and skills sector, with other public services in their locality, to explore the potential and complexities of collaborative strategic action, and to identify and remove barriers. LSIS is funding and working closely with the Association of Colleges to offer support to the colleges and providers in the pilot areas to help the sector to engage effectively.

Relevance to the FE and skills sector

2. Over recent years, we have seen the increasing focus in government policy on locality and the need for public services to respond flexibly to their service users, personalising services to meet particular needs of individuals and communities. There has also been a growing recognition of the importance of local public services working together in the locality to address priorities which require multi-service responses. The creation of Local Strategic Partnership and Local and Multi-Area Agreements have provided mechanisms for enacting this cross-public sector collaboration.
3. Colleges and skills sector providers have a key role to play in delivering local priorities since education and skills are often central planks of strategies to address social and economic priorities – whether community cohesion, rough-sleeping, unemployment, or social mobility. With the current recession, it is imperative that FE and skills providers maximise their contribution to delivery of local strategic priorities.
4. In seminar discussions held to consider the role of FE in its communities² we have also become aware of the complexity of working in cross-sector partnerships and with local authorities and communities. A recurrent issue has been the complexity of handling accountability both to the national, funding department level and to the locality; and of meeting national targets while responding to local priorities within the constraints attached to funding streams. These complexities are shared by other public service providers and underlie the rationale for the Total Place pilots. In a nutshell, the pilots aim to examine these constraints and through high-level ministerial and officer groups, will seek to remove barriers to enable more effective alignment of funding and effort in the locality.

¹ See the website for up-to-date information <http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/>

² Reports of seminars held on this topic can be found here:

<http://www.lsis.org.uk/PolicyServices/Discussion/SeminarSeries/ImportanceofBeingLocal.aspx>

<http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/ContributionofFEtoLocalPrioritiesPartnersandPlace.sflb>

<http://www.lsis.org.uk/PolicyServices/Discussion/SeminarSeries/FEcommunitiesLocalGovernment.aspx>

Total Place Pilots

A Briefing Paper

Background to the Total Place pilots

5. The Total Place initiative is part of the Treasury's Operational Efficiency Programme (OEP), where Sir Michael Bichard is the adviser on local government expenditure. As the name suggests, a key focus is on making efficiency savings. The OEP released a report alongside the 2009 Budget, which stated that the Government could make £15 billion in *'annual savings from back office operations and IT, collaborative procurement, asset management and sales, property and local incentives and empowerment'*. Of this, £6 billion in annual savings could be delivered during the current Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period, ie 2008-2011.
6. The Budget itself is still more stringent, requiring £35 billion in *'value-for-money'* savings over the CSR period. *'Local government and the police will both deliver a further 1 per cent of efficiency savings beyond the level of savings committed to at the 2007 CSR, with all savings recycled back to front-line services'*, according to the Budget document itself. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) itself is responsible for nearly £1 billion in efficiency savings.
7. As CLG said in a May 'Value for Money Update', *'the Total Place initiative will provide valuable lessons about how local authorities and their partners can maximise the impact of total public spending in their area, and the scope for driving better value for money for residents'*.
8. However, as indicated earlier, the Government is also eager to foster innovation in local services. In her statements on Total Place, Hazel Blears, the then-communities secretary praised *'real innovation'* she saw in Sunderland, and noted that the Total Place pilots have *'a unique opportunity to radically reshape and improve the quality of life of their communities'* and develop *'practical new ways of working – closer co-operation, more joint projects, greater pooling of budgets across local public services and crucially putting communities in control'*.
9. The purpose of the pilots on the PublicNet website is summarised as follows:

The challenge of increasing demands on services combined with the budget deficit, make it imperative to find radical new solutions which redesign or reshape public services. The Total Place strand of the Operational Efficiency Programme seeks to harness the creativity and liberate the potential of frontline staff and put them at the heart of the change process. The project provides local government with the opportunity to shape and develop the landscape going forward and working creatively, by delivering better experiences for the people that live there.

The aim of Total Place is to create the environment where collaboration and innovation on the frontline can flourish. This will be done by putting the spotlight on successful initiatives and reforms that can be replicated elsewhere and by eliminating barriers to change through

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reduction of the bureaucratic burdens on the frontline and stopping programmes that do not add value, to create space for those that do.

Governance of Total Place pilots

10. The pilots are being led from the Treasury, Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Leadership Centre for Local Government. A ministerial programme board, chaired by the Secretary of State for CLG, now John Denham, includes ministers from Treasury, Local Government Association, Cabinet Office and other high spending departments. A high-level officials group chaired by Sir Michael Bichard which includes senior officials from across Whitehall will oversee the work of the pilots learning from the progress of the pilots³.
11. This is a very influential set of arrangements indicating the seriousness of the agenda. It is important the FE and skills have a high profile in the work.

Pilots – funding, locations and timing

12. The pilots, announced in late April, *'will map flows of public spending in local areas and make links between services, to identify where public money can be spent more effectively'*. CLG will receive £5 million to fund 13 pilots in the following areas agreed in April 2009:
 - Dorset/ Poole Bournemouth
 - Kent
 - Croydon
 - Lewisham
 - Luton and Central Bedfordshire
 - Leicestershire and Leicester City
 - Worcestershire
 - Birmingham
 - Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire
 - Bradford
 - Manchester City Region and Warrington
 - South Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland
 - Durham

³ Currently neither group appears to include BIS (or its predecessors).

Total Place Pilots

A Briefing Paper

13. In early June, the *Local Government Chronicle* reported that CLG officials had written to pilot councils, urging them to begin work on their Total Place projects as soon as possible. They will be determining the key themes that they wish to address in the near future. Interim findings are due in mid-October, with final reports due on February 19th, 2010. An 'aggregated national report' will be produced in the following March, for inclusion in the 2010 budget.

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