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A survey of local authorities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Through electronic means, local authorities might improve their key functions and contribute to the achievement of the modernisation agenda. Given the rapidly changing environment, both inside and outside local authorities, the Department is keen to understand the processes by which local authorities are planning and implementing e-government.

A survey of all local authorities in England was conducted between August and November 2002. The survey process and data management was administered by McCallum Layton, with questionnaire design and reporting conducted by the Department's Local and Regional Government Research Unit.

This survey provides a comprehensive picture, across the whole of English local government, of the approaches local authorities are taking, and the challenges they face, in the implementation of e-government. The information it provides will also contribute to a detailed evaluation of e-government processes, which is being conducted by the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies at the University of Newcastle – due to be published in Autumn 2003.

Strategy and leadership

Many local authorities recognise that e-government has far-reaching implications for the way they operate and how they achieve their organisational objectives. The survey shows that e-government is often reflected in a number of different plans and strategies: in addition to the IEG statement or e-government strategy, many local authorities also address e-government in their best value performance plans and community strategies. It is clear from this that many local authorities consider e-government to be a tool for facilitating the achievement of a variety of objectives and targets.

Local authorities also recognise the importance of having strong leadership to drive forward the implementation of e-government, as all but one authority has a senior officer e-champion and almost all (97%) have an elected member e-champion.

Capacity and training

Almost three-quarters (72%) of local authorities report that their officers and/or members lack sufficient skills and understanding in relation to e-government: 69% have identified skills gaps amongst officers and 51% have identified gaps amongst elected members. The higher figure for officers probably reflects the fact that they tend to require a broader range of e-government skills than members do. Officers and members are most likely to lack skills relating to strategic issues and project management, as opposed to more technical skills. Most noticeably 84% of local authorities think their officers lack skills in change

management/process re-engineering and 69% report that their members lack appreciation of how e-government can contribute to the authority's strategic objectives.

To help them fill these skills gaps, 94% of authorities provide training for officers and 79% do so for members. This training is most often provided on an ad hoc or project-by project basis: 83% of local authorities buy in specialist training for officers as required for particular projects and 48% do so for members.

In addition to adequate skills and understanding, officers and members need the right tools to help them meet the requirements of e-government. The survey shows that local authorities provide a range of ICT facilities to their officers and member. However, it seems that officers and members are not universally provided with their own PC, e-mail, access to internet, etc – instead it seems that local authorities prioritise provision of ICT facilities depending on nature of an individual's role and responsibilities. For example, in 70% and 41% of local authorities respectively over three-quarters of officers and members have their own PC and in 68% and 63% of local authorities respectively over three-quarters of officers and members have a personal e-mail address.

Partnerships

Local authorities evidently see the benefits of working in partnership with other organisations to help them implement e-government and to meet the 2005 target for e-government, no doubt as a way of gaining access to additional capacity, expertise and funds. Almost all (94%) local authorities have set up a partnership arrangement with organisations in the public, private or voluntary/community sectors in relation to e-government.

County and district councils are the most likely types of authority to form partnerships to help them implement e-government. This may well be a reflection of the two-tier system, meaning that district and county councils are seeking to exploit existing links and relationships in implementing e-government. This is further emphasised by the fact that most e-government partnerships are with adjacent/different tier local authorities. It is, however, also common for local authorities to set up e-government partnerships with health local authorities/trusts, private sector technology suppliers and community/voluntary organisations. In summary, 61% of e-government partnerships are with the public sector, 20% are with the private organisations and 19% with community/voluntary sectors.

Processes

Consulting the public and local businesses: The growing importance of the e-government agenda for local authorities is further reflected by the extent to which local authorities are seeking to involve the public and, to a lesser extent, businesses in developing their e-government programme. 90% and 48% respectively of respondents to the survey indicated that they are seeking to engage the public and local business in the way they implement e-government.

Promoting access to e-enabled information and services: It is important that e-government does not lead to the exclusion of those who cannot, or choose not, to access

information and services electronically. Almost half (48%) of responding local authorities provide free public access to the internet or other online services. Furthermore, 41% of local authorities have considered the needs of the visually/hearing impaired. However, only 20% of local authorities present information in different languages via their e-enabled access channels. The results suggest that more London boroughs and county councils are taking 'social inclusion' into consideration when designing and developing their e-government access channels.

Managing the e-government programme and projects: the survey provides a mixed picture of whether, and how effectively, local authorities have put in place the processes or frameworks necessary for the implementation of e-government. These processes include analysing costs and benefits, identifying and managing risk, monitoring outcomes, etc. Whilst in some authorities, individual e-government projects are supported by these processes, this occurs less commonly at the programme level – probably because implementing processes for a whole programme is far more complex than doing so for an individual project.

Overall, most local authorities have in place formal processes to identify and manage risk and to evaluate e-government projects – 80% and 83% respectively. The picture is more varied when it comes to project management – whilst around two-thirds of local authorities do have formal methodologies or frameworks for managing projects, in 22% of local authorities it is up to individuals how they manage their e-government projects. Local authorities are far less likely to have undertaken a formal cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of projects or their entire e-government programme: only 20% of local authorities have already undertaken a CBA of their e-government projects or programme, but a further 66% plan to do so.

Outcomes of e-government

INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND WAYS OF WORKING

E-government has the potential to increase the speed and efficiency of internal local authority processes by allowing local authorities to rethink and improve the way the 'back office' works. The survey suggests that almost three-quarters (74%) of local authorities have in place procedures to measure efficiency improvements of their internal processes that may have arisen due to e-government. It seems most likely for local authorities to collate baseline data on the costs of services, as 51% of them do so.

Whether through these processes or more informal observation, respondents reported that e-government has, to varying degrees, impacted on the internal systems, processes and ways of working in their authorities:

- 60% and 67% of local authorities respectively report that e-government has had no effect on **requirements for office space or on running costs**. Of those that reported a change in these aspects, more suggested that there had been a rise than a fall: 21% reported an increase in requirements for office space and 14% reported a decrease; 20% reported a rise in running costs and 7% reported a fall.

- 47% of local authorities reported a change in the **cost of providing information** as a result of e-government – with 35% of local authorities seeing e-government as having brought about a rise in these costs and only 12% reporting a reduction. This may, however, be due to the initial outlay of expenditure required to set up the systems needed to provide information electronically, particularly if there is increased demand for information.
- 48% believe e-government has had implications for the amount of **time staff spent providing information to the public**: 34% indicate that staff spend more time providing information to the public as a result of e-government and 14% report that staff time has reduced.
- 24% report a change in **the cost of processing transactions** – with 13% reporting an increase in these costs and 11% of local authorities indicating a decrease. 24% also report a change in **staff time spent processing transactions** – with 18% reporting a reduction as a result of e-government and only 6% reporting an increase in staff time.

E-enabling processes and methods of communication can provide greater scope for flexible working, particularly around location and hours of work. It therefore follows that 61% of local authorities report that their e-government programme has already had a positive impact on the ability of staff to work more flexibly and no authority sees it as diminishing their ability to do so.

SERVICE QUALITY

41% of local authorities have established documented processes for obtaining citizen and business views on the **quality** of e-enabled services and communication channels. Slightly fewer (37%) local authorities collect and analyse information on the **take-up** of electronic services and communication channels. Whether via such systematic methods or more intuitively, respondents clearly think that e-government has had a positive effect on the way it interacts with the public:

- Most local authorities (91% and 76% respectively) see e-government as improving accessibility to information and services.
- 78% and 53% respectively report an increase in the take-up of e-enabled information and services.
- 50% of local authorities suggest that there has been a rise in joint provision of information.

IMPACT ON LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Only 12% of local authorities have in place procedures to assess the impact of e-government on levels of public involvement. Whether through such formal procedures or more informal observation, some authorities (35%) suggest that e-government has impacted on levels of public involvement: 34% report a rise and 1% report a fall. This

suggests local authorities have been slower to pursue electronic means of consultation and participation and have instead focused on the improvements for service delivery.

Overview

Local authorities recognise the objectives and potential benefits of e-government (particularly in terms of service delivery) and understand the challenges that e-government presents. They are, however, cautious about making radical and costly changes. This, coupled with current capacity constraints, may explain why many local authorities seem to favour a piecemeal approach to the implementation of e-government and are making changes in a more ad-hoc and informal way. That said, local authorities are beginning to see benefits from e-government in terms of access to, and take-up of local information and services, as well as more opportunities for joint and flexible working. Further surveys will allow us to watch the progress made by local authorities in developing e-government in the future and to understand how they overcome the obstacles they face in doing so.

CHAPTER 1

Background and introduction to the research

1.1 Objectives of the research

Through electronic means, local authorities might improve their key functions and contribute to the achievement of the modernisation agenda. Given the rapidly changing environment, both inside and outside local authorities, the Department is keen to understand the processes by which local authorities are planning and implementing e-government.

This survey provides a comprehensive picture, across the whole of English local government, of the approaches local authorities are taking, and the challenges they face, in the implementation of e-government. The information it provides will also contribute to a detailed evaluation of e-government processes, which is being conducted by the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies at the University of Newcastle – due to be published in Autumn 2003.

1.2 Policy background

MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

E-Government is central to the reform and modernisation agenda for public services. Modernising local government – through Community Planning, Best Value, Comprehensive Performance Assessment and new council constitutions and standards arrangements – is about enhancing the quality of local services and promoting local democracy. Local e-government can underpin all of this. As set out in the *National strategy for local e-government* – www.local.gov.uk, e-government has the potential to help local authorities to:

- **Improve services** – making them more accessible, more convenient, more responsive and more cost-effective. It can also make it easier to join up local services (within councils, between councils, and between councils and other public, voluntary and private agencies).
- **Renew local democracy** – making councils more open, more accountable, more inclusive and better able to lead their communities. E-government can enhance the opportunities for citizens to debate with each other and to engage with their local services and councils.

- **Promote local economic vitality** – a modern communications infrastructure, a skilled workforce and the active promotion of e-business can help local councils and regions promote employment in their areas and the employability of their citizens.
- **Improve the processes that underpin services** – e-government technologies provide the opportunity to overhaul the way the ‘back office’ works, making it easier, faster and cheaper to process information, to share it between services and to present it to customers, staff and partners.

Thus e-government is a wide-ranging issue, touching upon everything from the fundamental priorities of local government and its relationship with its citizens to the technical standards necessary to get public services joined up. It is not an end in itself, but at the heart of the drive to modernise government.

TARGETS FOR IMPLEMENTING E-GOVERNMENT

Central and local government are committed to making all services available electronically by December 2005. The Government has emphasised that this does not mean that all services should be provided on the web, to the exclusion of other ways of delivering them. It does mean internet technologies should be used to make services available in people’s homes, on websites, over the telephone and at council offices and one-stop-shops, but most importantly, in ways that are convenient and helpful to users. Services should be offered in ways people will use and must provide value for money.

By 2005, all services should be available electronically, but accessed through a variety of channels. It is up to local councils to set their own “access strategies”, including a balance of targets for direct internet use, telephone and electronically supported face-to-face delivery. Even direct internet services can be offered through a number of channels, including PCs, kiosks and digital television.¹

The Government will continue to measure local government’s progress towards the 100% target by a corporate Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI157). Local government is currently being consulted on whether the BVPI guidance should be amended to make the returns more consistent and easier to compile.

INVESTMENT IN E-GOVERNMENT

Findings from the second round of IEG statements reveals that councils in England plan to spend £3.1 billion on e-government up to 2005/6. The ODPM programme of funding for this is £675 million. This support package includes funding for National Projects and e-partnerships. All authorities in England have also received grants of £200,000 each in both 2002/03 and 2003/04 to support the implementing e-government (IEG) process.

These and other issues that members and officers will need to consider in implementing e-government are set out in the *National strategy for local e-government*.²

1 See Channels Framework – Delivering government services in the new economy, OeE, 2002. See also draft DTV policy framework, OeE Oct 2002

2 <http://www.localgov.gov.uk/nationalstrategy/>

1.3 Research methodology

A survey of all local authorities in England was conducted between August and November 2002. The survey process and data management was administered by McCallum Layton, with questionnaire design and reporting conducted by the Department's Local and Regional Government Research Unit.

The survey questionnaire was e-mailed to all local government e-champions (or equivalent). The questionnaire was designed to collate information on the way local government is approaching e-government and the challenges this agenda presents for local authorities. More specifically the questionnaire addressed the following issues:

- strategy and leadership
- capacity
- partnerships and procurement
- process issues
- outcomes of e-government

Respondents were asked to bear in mind the definition of e-government provided in 'e-gov@local' – Towards a National Strategy for Local Government:

“e-Government means exploiting the power of information and communications technology to help transform the accessibility, quality and cost-effectiveness of public services, and to help revitalise the relationship between customers and citizens and the public bodies who work on their behalf.”

266 local authorities responded to the survey – that is a response rate of 69%. The profile of respondents was broadly representative of English local government in terms of local authority type. For more detail on the survey process and response rates please refer to the technical note at Annex A.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report presents survey findings according to the following themes:

Chapter 2 looks issues around e-government strategies and leadership

Chapter 3 discusses the areas in which local authorities have identified skills-gaps in relation to e-government and looks at how local authorities are seeking to plug these gaps.

Chapter 4 provides information on the extent and nature of partnerships that local authorities are setting up to help them implement e-government. It also touches upon local authorities' experience of procuring e-government systems.

Chapter 5 addresses the processes local authorities are putting in place to implement e-government. These processes include project management, cost-benefit analysis, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

Chapter 6 looks at the emerging outcomes of e-government – both in terms of impacts for the internal workings of local authorities, but also external outcomes relating to service delivery and public participation in local decisions.

The report is drawn together in Chapter 7: Conclusions, which summarises where local authorities are in terms of implementing e-government and the key factors that seem to influence progress.

CHAPTER 2

Strategy and leadership

2.1 Strategy and strategy development

IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT (IEG) STATEMENTS

All local authorities³ that are subject to the Best Value Performance Indicator 157 have been requested in each of the last two years to prepare an Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) Statement. Satisfactory completion of statements qualifies local authorities for funding from central government to be used for e-government. Every council (bar one) received £200,000 in 2002/03 to assist in implementing their plans.

In October 2002, councils completed a second IEG statement setting out their plans and priorities for e-government. The 2002 IEG statement was required to reflect the key elements of the draft national strategy for local e-government, *e-gov@local*, which was published for consultation on 8 April 2002. The statements needed to describe an authority's rationale for the role it expects e-government to play in the wider drive to transform local authority organisation and service delivery for the benefit of all citizens and customers. All local authorities demonstrating adequate progress and plans in their 2003/04 IEG statement will receive a second tranche of £200,000 in 2003/04.

The research sought to find whether local authorities have developed formal corporate e-government strategies, in addition to their IEG statements. The survey revealed that 35% of local authorities – that is 95 local authorities – have a separate, additional corporate strategy and a further 27% (73 local authorities) are in the process of developing one. It seems that London boroughs and unitary local authorities are the most likely to have an additional corporate strategy, as 47% of each report having such a document, compared with 39% of counties, 33% of district councils and only 28% of metropolitan districts. 37% of local authorities do **not** have (nor plan to develop) an e-government strategy (separate to their IEG statement).

67 local authorities (71% of local authorities with a separate, formal e-government strategy) have developed it since 2001. No responding authority developed an e-government strategy before 1998. This is probably, in part, a result of increased central government policies and initiatives relating to e-local government. In the Modernising Government White Paper (1998), the government set a target that by 2008 all services (with exclusions for policy or operational reasons) should be available electronically. The Prime Minister announced in March 2000 that this date should be advanced to 2005. Then in 2001, BVPI 157 came into effect and the IEG process began, and in 2002 *e-gov@local* – the

³ English County, District, Unitary Councils, London Boroughs, National Park Local authorities, the Corporation of London, the Greater London Authority, London Development Agency, Transport for London and Fire local authorities.

consultation paper on the Government’s e-local government strategy was published. Most local authorities (82% of 169) that have, or are developing, an e-government strategy will make it publicly available.

Development of the strategy

INTERNAL

Three-quarters (76%) of local authorities (who have or are developing a strategy – 169 in total) indicated that they have undertaken a comprehensive process involving both council staff and elected members in developing the document. 18% of these same local authorities involved council staff only – but it was then reviewed by elected members. In only 7% of local authorities, the strategy has been/is being developed by a single individual or small team, without wider consultation.

EXTERNAL

It would appear that local authorities also involve individuals outside their organisation when developing e-government strategies. Local authorities most often consult public sector partners (76% of the 169 local authorities that have/are developing a strategy) and to a lesser extent partners in the private or community/voluntary sectors (62%) and the general public (62%). Only 5% of local authorities with, or developing, a strategy consulted no-one outside the authority during its development. See Table 1 below for more detail.

Table 1 Who, outside the authority, have you consulted in developing your e-government strategy?	
	% of local authorities
Public sector partners	76%
Partners in the private, community or voluntary sectors	62%
General public	62%
LSP: core members or steering group	46%
Stakeholders in the local community (not partners)	39%

Base: 169 (local authorities who have, or are developing, a corporate e-government strategy – separate to their IEG statement)

Links with other strategies

LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITH A FORMAL E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY (SEPARATE TO THEIR IEG STATEMENT)

E-government is a far-reaching agenda that has implications for the way local government operates. This is emphasised by the fact that local authorities use a number of different strategies, plans and documents to inform their strategic direction in relation to e-government. As one might expect almost all (95%) of the local authorities that have/are developing an e-government strategy, use their IEG statement for strategic direction. But a significant majority (88%) also use their Best Value Performance Plan and half (50%) use their community strategy for direction on implementing e-government. This emphasises the links between, and the impact that e-government has on, the different elements of the modernisation agenda – not only quality of service delivery, but also developing better relationships with the community. Over two-thirds of these local authorities (36%) report that individual service areas/departments are responsible for developing their own e-government plans, in addition to the local authorities corporate e-government strategy.

13% of local authorities also indicated that there were other documents, not listed in the questionnaire that they use for strategic direction on e-government. These included, most noticeably: corporate strategies (7 local authorities or 4%) and customer service/access strategies (3 local authorities or 2%)

LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITHOUT A FORMAL E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY (SEPARATE TO THEIR IEG STATEMENT)

As mentioned 37% of local authorities – that is 101 local authorities – do not have a formal e-government strategy in addition to their IEG statement. As one might expect, all of these local authorities use their IEG statements for strategic direction on e-government. 80% of them use their Best Value Performance Plans and 37% use their community strategy for direction. In around two-thirds (31%) of these local authorities, individual service areas/departments develop their own e-government plans, in addition to the local authorities corporate e-government strategy.

27% of local authorities also indicated that there were other documents, not listed in the questionnaire that they use for strategic direction on e-government. These included, most noticeably:

- IT/ICT strategies (9 local authorities or 9%)
- LSP programme (7 local authorities or 7%)
- Customer service/access strategies (4 local authorities or 4%)

2.2 Leadership

As stated in the *National strategy*, local leadership – particularly that of elected councillors – is vital to deliver the benefits of local e-government. As a result, councils have been encouraged to identify senior councillors and managers as ‘e-champions’ to push the e-government agenda forward in their local authorities. The survey indicated that all but one authority has a senior officer e-champion and almost all (97%) have an elected member e-champion. Similarly a very high proportion of local authorities (92%) have a central e-government team, group or taskforce.

CHAPTER 3

Capacity and training

3.1 Skills needs assessment

Approaching two-thirds (63%) of local authorities assess skills needs on an ad-hoc basis – they tend to do so in relation to specific projects. This is particularly the case amongst metropolitan districts, 76% of which take this approach. It is far less common for local authorities to have undertaken a formal, corporate approach to assessing skills needs in relation to e-government: only 7% of local authorities have already undertaken a documented skills needs assessment, but 41% plan to do so. The survey suggests that county councils are the most likely to undertake a documented skills needs analysis of e-government, as 14% have already done so (twice the average) and 54% plan to do so.

Another approach local authorities may take is to incorporate e-government skills into their comprehensive skills needs assessment, but only 11% of local authorities report having done so. It seems still more rare for local authorities to address e-government skill needs via individual appraisal and training systems, as only 4% have taken this approach.

3.2 Skills-gaps

Whether as the result of a formal process or more informally, approaching three-quarters (73%) of local authorities report that they lack sufficient skills and understanding in relation to e-government: 69% have identified skills gaps amongst officers and 51% have identified gaps amongst elected members. However, a quarter (26%) has not identified any gap in skills and understanding of their officers or members. Figures tend to be higher in relation to officers – perhaps because officers require a broader range of e-government skills. See Table 2 below for more detail.

Table 2 Has your authority identified gaps in skills and understanding in relation to e-government?

	All local authorities	County	District	London boroughs	Unitaries	Metropolitan districts
Officers	69%	61%	67%	74%	78%	80%
Members	51%	43%	51%	58%	53%	68%
No skills gaps	26%	39%	27%	21%	19%	20%
Base	266	28	162	19	32	25

Base: Numbers of each type of local authority responding to the survey

As Table 2 shows, fewer county councils have identified skills gaps amongst either officers and members: 61% of counties, compared with 80% of metropolitan districts, report that their officers lack certain e-government skills and 43% of counties, compared with 68% of metropolitan districts, report the same for members.

Local authorities (of all types) believe they lack skills in a range of areas, but more likely those skills relating to strategic/project management that are required to effectively implement e-government, as opposed to more technical skills. This is possibly because local authorities tend to 'buy-in' IT specialists to implement and manage IT systems. This is the case across all types of authority. Most noticeably 84% of local authorities think their officers lack skills in change management/process re-engineering and 69% report that their members are lacking appreciation of how e-government can contribute to the authority's strategic objectives.

It would seem essential that local authorities have the skills to manage and evaluate e-government projects and programmes, yet 62% of local authorities say that their officers lack project management skills. This is not specific to e-government – past research has identified project management skills to be lacking across local government, for example 2001 research⁴ on procurement found that 59% of local authorities employ consultants to help them with project management. Furthermore 57% report that their officers lack the ability to evaluate or analyse the costs/benefits of e-government projects.

Table 3 In what areas relating to e-government have you identified gaps in skills or understanding in your authority?

	Officers	Members
Strategic		
Change management/process re-engineering	84%	31%
Appreciation of how e-government contributes to strategic objectives	56%	69%
Managing strategic implementation of e-government across the authority	54%	43%
Leadership	20%	12%
Management		
Project management	62%	10%
Evaluation or cost benefit analysis of e-government projects and programmes	57%	28%
Technical		
Use of internet/e-mail/software	21%	39%
Implementing and managing ICT systems	19%	7%
Procurement of ICT systems	16%	9%

Base: 197 (local authorities responding to this question)

Fewer local authorities (21%) indicated that their officers lack internet/PC skills, and 39% of local authorities believe that their elected members are not sufficiently skilled in this area. See Table 3 below for more detail.

⁴ Local authority procurement – a research report, June 2001, DTLR.

As mentioned above the survey tells a similar story across all types of authority. Although, metropolitan districts seem the most emphatic about their officers lacking the more corporate skills that e-government requires, for example:

- 85% of metropolitan districts indicated that their officers lack project management skills (compared with 73% of London boroughs and 53% of counties); and
- 80% of metropolitan districts reported that their officers lack understanding of how to manage the strategic implementation of e-government (compared with 60% of London boroughs and 65% of counties).

And, London boroughs seem less likely than other types of authority to have identified a lack of skills amongst their elected members. For example:

- Only 33% of London boroughs suggested that their members require better understanding of how to manage the strategic implementation of e-government across the authority (compared with 50% of metropolitan districts and 48% of unitaries); and
- 20% of boroughs reported that their members lack skills in change management (compared with 35% of metropolitan districts and 40% of unitaries).

3.3 Training

TRAINING FOR OFFICERS

94% of local authorities provide some sort of e-government training for their officers. As with assessing skills needs, local authorities seem to take a more informal, ad hoc approach to providing training on e-government for officers:

- 83% of local authorities buy in specialist training as required for particular projects;
- 64% provide support (financial or otherwise) for individuals to seek professional qualifications; and
- in 42% of local authorities e-government-related training is decided on an ad hoc basis between individuals and managers.

To date, few local authorities have taken a corporate approach to providing e-government training for officers – this is true for all types of authority – only 7% of local authorities overall provide a dedicated, comprehensive training programme for e-government. Although a third (33%) do incorporate e-government skills as sections/modules within established training programmes, which could provide the necessary understanding of the strategic implications of e-government and its relationship with other corporate objectives and programmes. It also seems that a fair proportion (37%) of local authorities choose to establish an e-government ‘centre of expertise’ that provides advice and documented guidance, perhaps instead of training all officers. In 27% of local authorities the provision of guidance/advice is left to individual service areas/departments – this approach might allow any guidance to take account of service-specific considerations.

The survey does, however, suggest that local authorities may take a more corporate approach to e-government training in the future – perhaps because so many local authorities (84%) now recognise that their officers lack the more strategic e-government skills. 21% of local authorities are currently developing a dedicated, comprehensive training programme for e-government and 23% are introducing e-government skills within existing training programmes. See Table 4 below for more detail.

Table 4 Arrangements for training and support on the strategic and management aspects of e-government – OFFICERS

	Has in place	Is developing
The authority buys in specialist training as required for particular projects	83%	6%
The authority provides support (financial or otherwise) for individuals to seek professional qualifications	64%	3%
Individuals and managers decide training on an ad hoc basis	42%	1%
The authority has a 'centre of expertise' that provides advice and documented guidance	37%	13%
The authority incorporates e-government skills as sections/modules within its established training programmes.	33%	23%
Individual service areas/departments provide documented guidance or advice for their own staff	27%	5%
The authority provides a dedicated, comprehensive training programme for e-government	7%	21%

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

It seems that slightly fewer local authorities provide some sort of e-government training for their members – 79% of local authorities do so compared with 94% for officers. As with officer training, the results indicate that e-government training is more often provided on ad hoc basis in response to a specific need – almost half local authorities (48%) buy in specialist training for members as required for particular projects. A fair proportion of local authorities (28%) provide a 'centre of expertise' from which members can seek advice and a further 11% are developing this type of resource for the future.

It does, however, appear a little more likely for local authorities to provide a dedicated e-government training programme for members than for officers – 19% of local authorities already do so for members (compared with 7% for officers). As one would expect, few local authorities (9%) provide support for members to seek professional qualifications in relation to e-government – probably because elected members tend to be less likely to have a hands-on role in the implementation of e-government.

Table 5 Arrangements for training and support on the strategic and management aspects of e-government – MEMBERS

	Has in place	Is developing
The authority buys in specialist training as required for particular projects	48%	7%
The authority has a 'centre of expertise' that provides advice and documented guidance	28%	11%
The authority incorporates e-government skills as sections/modules within its established training programmes.	23%	20%
The authority provides a dedicated, comprehensive training programme for e-government	19%	26%
Individual service areas/departments provide documented guidance or advice for their own staff	14%	2%
The authority provides support (financial or otherwise) for individuals to seek professional qualifications	9%	1%
Individuals and managers decide training on an ad hoc basis	1%	-

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

In addition to those categories of training provided in the questionnaire, some respondents suggested that training may often be provided to members in the form of seminars or briefing – this was cited by 9 (3% of) local authorities.

Almost all (97%) responding local authorities provide IT (e-mail/software) training for their officers and almost three-quarters (73%) provide this for their elected members. Only three local authorities provide no IT (e-mail/software) training for their officers or members. As Table 6 below shows, the provision of IT training to officers is high (96%+) across all types of authority, but a little more mixed in relation to elected members. A very high proportion (95%) of London boroughs provide IT training to members, compared with 72% of unitaries and 67% of districts.

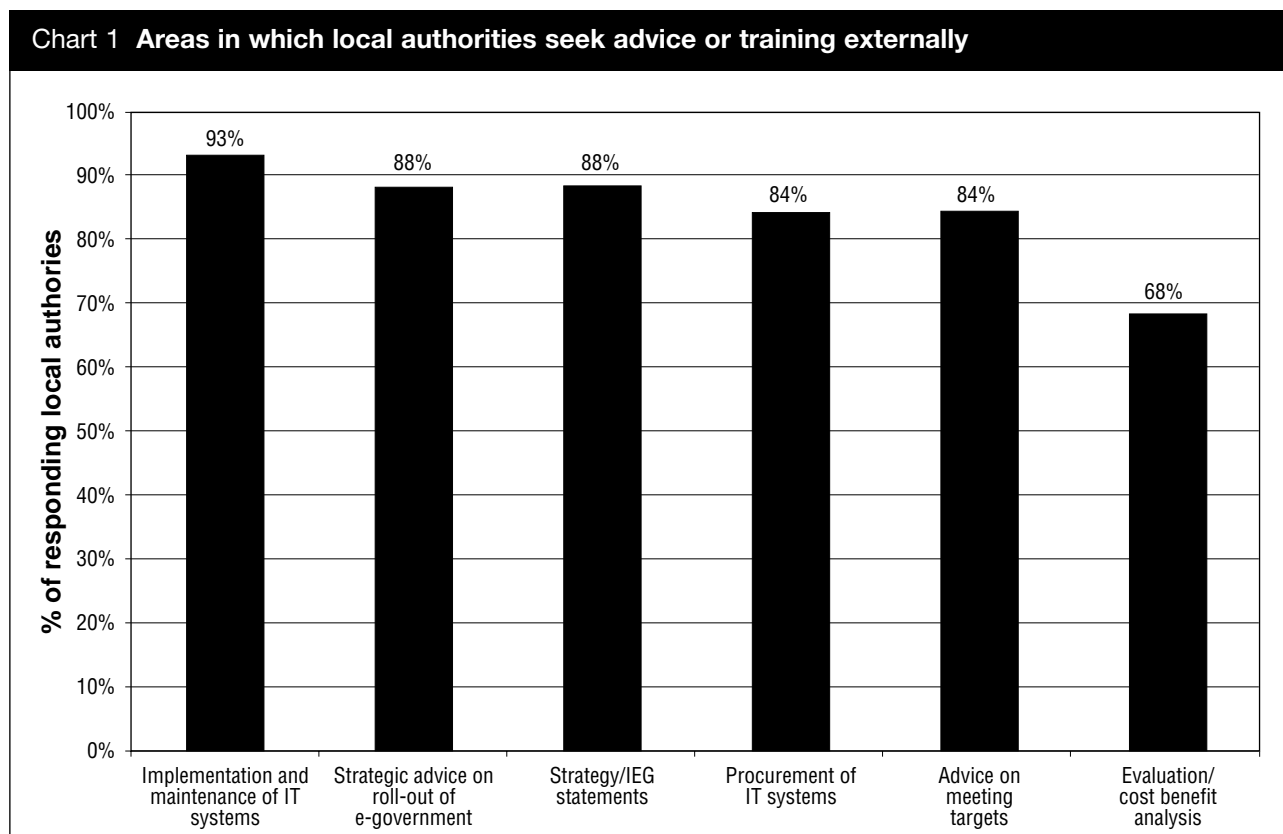
Table 6 Has your authority identified gaps in skills and understanding in relation to e-government?

	All local authorities	County	District	London boroughs	Metropolitan districts	Unitaries
Officers	97%	96%	96%	100%	100%	97%
Members	73%	86%	67%	95%	88%	72%
Base	267	28	162	19	25	32

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

3.4 External sources of advice or training on e-government

The greatest number of local authorities (93%) turn to external organisations for help with implementing and maintaining IT systems and the least (68%) do so for help with evaluation/cost-benefit analysis. These results are shown clearly on Chart 1 and discussed in some detail below.



Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

- **IT systems**

84% of local authorities turn to external organisations for advice on procuring IT systems – most often from other local authorities (66%) and the private sector (58%). Almost a third (33%) of local authorities seek advice from three or more types of organisation.

As mentioned above a significant number of local authorities (93%) seek external advice on implementing/maintaining IT systems. Table 7 below shows which types of organisations local authorities turn to for advice – the survey indicates that of those local authorities that seek support on the implementation/maintenance of IT systems, the most (85%) do so from the private sector. It seems that few local authorities consult a broad range of organisations on this issue, as only a quarter (26%) seek advice from three or more types of organisation on how to implement and maintain IT systems.

- **Strategic issues**

A significant proportion of local authorities seek external advice on strategic issues associated with the implementation of e-government: 88% do so in relation to the strategic roll-out of e-government and 88% do so when drawing up strategies/IEG statements. This supports earlier findings that many local authorities have identified skills-gaps amongst officers and members in relation to the strategic aspects of e-government. Local authorities would appear to consult a variety of different organisations on these strategic issues – when drawing up a strategy/IEG statement, almost half (49%) of local authorities seek advice from three or more types of organisation and 46% consult three or more in relation the strategic roll-out of e-government. This perhaps to be expected given the number of stakeholders that have an interest or role in the strategic implementation of the e-government agenda.

Other local authorities seem the most popular resource when it comes to e-government strategy, as 68% of respondents consult other local authorities when drawing up e-government strategy/IEG statements and 64% seek their advice on implementing e-government across the authority. Representative bodies are also a source of advice for local authorities – although to a lesser extent – in particular, 45% of local authorities seek advice from such organisations in drawing up strategies/IEG statements. 84% seek external advice on meeting government targets, and not surprisingly they most often do so from central government – this is true in 62% of local authorities.

- **Evaluation**

Whilst a good proportion of local authorities (68%) turn to external organisations for help with evaluating or conducting cost/benefit analysis of e-government projects and programmes, this is the lowest figure across all the different aspects of e-government that the survey asked about. 46% of local authorities turn to the private sector for advice on conducting CBA and 42% consult other local authorities.

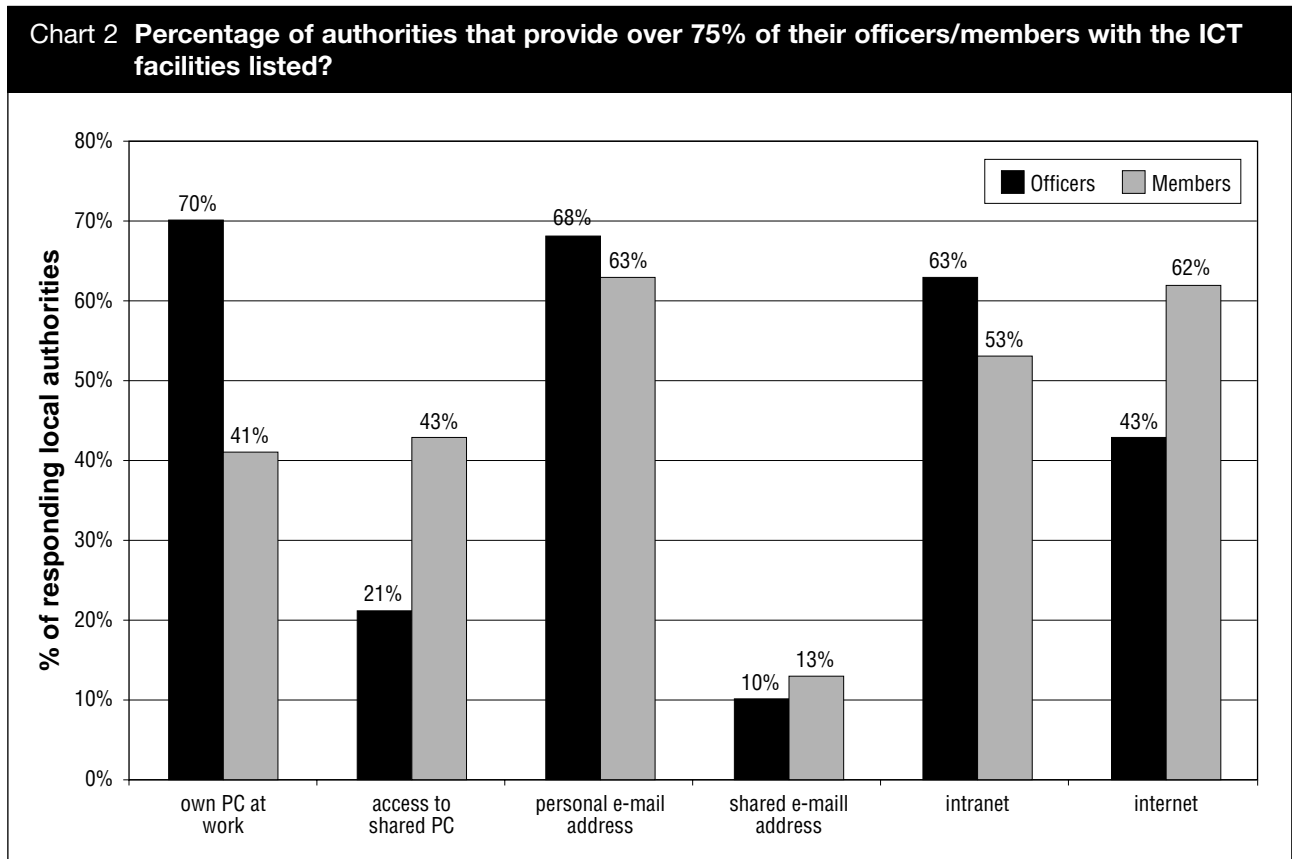
Table 7 From which organisations does your authority seek advice or training for each of the following areas or tasks?

	Other local authorities	Private sector	Representative bodies	Central government	Other public sector
Procurement of IT systems	66%	58%	31%	23%	21%
Implementation/maintenance of IT system(s)	53%	85%	25%	9%	12%
Strategic advice on roll-out of e-government across the authority <i>(this would include addressing skills, culture and organisational issues)</i>	64%	56%	43%	43%	20%
Drawing up strategy/IEG statements	68%	37%	45%	61%	15%
Advice on meeting central government targets	53%	30%	42%	62%	14%
Evaluation or cost benefit analysis of e-government projects and programmes	42%	46%	23%	20%	8%

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to this question)

3.5 ICT facilities for officers and members

A further issue affecting the capacity of officers and members to contribute to the implementation of e-government relates to the ICT facilities that are made available to them to conduct council business. Respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of officers and members provided with different ICT facilities.



Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

ACCESS TO PC

A majority of local authorities (70%) report that over three-quarters of their officers have their own PC at work. In far fewer local authorities (41%) do the same proportion (76%-100%) of members have their own PC – this is to be expected given the different nature of members’ work and the likelihood of them working at home. It seems less likely for local authorities to provide access to a shared PC, as 42% of local authorities provide 76%-100% of officers with this facility and 43% provide 76%-100% of their members with a shared computer.

E-MAIL ADDRESS

In 68% and 63% of local authorities respectively, over three-quarters of officers and of members have a personal e-mail address. It seems more unusual for local authorities to

provide a shared or group e-mail address – only 10% and 13% of local authorities respectively provide most of their officers and members with shared e-mail. So it seems that local authorities see the ability to communicate via e-mail as a priority, given the high proportion of local government officers and members that are provided with this facility.

INTRANET/INTERNET

The survey shows that a good proportion of local authority officers and members have access to some sort of intranet, as over three-quarters of officers and members do so in 63% and 56% of local authorities respectively. Few local authorities (8% and 15% respectively) do not provide access to an intranet for any of its officers and members.

Interestingly, it seems more likely for local authorities to provide a greater proportion of their elected members with internet facilities: in 62% of local authorities over three-quarters of their members have access to the internet, whereas 43% of local authorities provide three-quarters of their officers with the internet.

Table 8 below summarises these results by providing percentages of local authorities that provide each type of IT facility to one or more of their officers and members. It shows that across local authorities as a whole, it is more likely for officers to be provided with a greater range of IT facilities. It also seems that local authorities prioritise e-mail facilities, as the highest proportions of local authorities provide officers and members with their own e-mail address – 93% and 89% respectively.

Table 8 Percentage of local authorities that provide one or more of their officers and members with the IT facilities listed

	Officers	Members
Own PC at work	91%	84%
Shared computer at work	77%	70%
Own e-mail address	93%	89%
Shared e-mail address	71%	62%
Access to Intranet	91%	86%
Access to Internet	91%	84%

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

ANALYSIS BY TYPE OF AUTHORITY

Tables 9-12 below compare these results across the different types of authority. It reveals some interesting differences between types of local authorities:

- London boroughs tend to provide IT facilities to a higher proportion of their officers and members than all other types of authority – one exception is that fewer London boroughs seem to provide an intranet.

- District councils seem to provide a higher proportion of their officers with their own PC than any other type of authority – the contrast with county councils is particularly striking. These findings may, in part, be a reflection of the following: county councils have proportionately more staff compared with budget; county staff have a more diverse range of responsibilities; and, are spread across a wider range of locations. It may, therefore, be more difficult for counties to provide most/all of their officers with their own PC.

These findings are illustrated below.

Table 9 Percentage of each type of authority that provides 76%-100% of officers/members with their own PC

	Districts	London boroughs	Unitaries	Metropolitan districts	Counties	All local authorities
officers	85%	74%	53%	36%	25%	70%
members	33%	63%	41%	52%	61%	41%
Base	162	19	32	25	28	266

Base: Numbers of each type of local authority responding to the survey

Table 10 Percentage of each type of authority that provides 76%-100% of officers/members with a personal e-mail address

	Districts	London boroughs	Unitaries	Metropolitan districts	Counties	All local authorities
officers	82%	84%	53%	32%	29%	68%
members	56%	79%	72%	76%	79%	63%
Base	162	19	32	25	28	266

Base: Numbers of each type of local authority responding to the survey

Table 11 Percentage of each type of authority that provides 76%-100% of officers/members with access to an intranet

	Districts	London boroughs	Unitaries	Metropolitan districts	Counties	All local authorities
officers	69%	68%	53%	48%	43%	63%
members	47%	68%	69%	68%	79%	53%
Base	162	19	32	25	28	266

Base: Numbers of each type of local authority responding to the survey

Table 12 Percentage of each type of authority that provides 76%-100% of officers/members with access to the internet

	Districts	London boroughs	Unitaries	Metropolitan districts	Counties	All local authorities
officers	50%	62%	31%	16%	39%	43%
members	54%	84%	72%	76%	79%	62%
Base	162	19	32	25	28	266

Base: Numbers of each type of local authority responding to the survey

CHAPTER 4

Partnerships and procurement

4.1 Extent of partnership working on e-government

Approaching all local authorities (94%) report having set up a partnership arrangement with other organisations in the public, private or voluntary/community sectors to help them achieve the 2005 target for e-government.

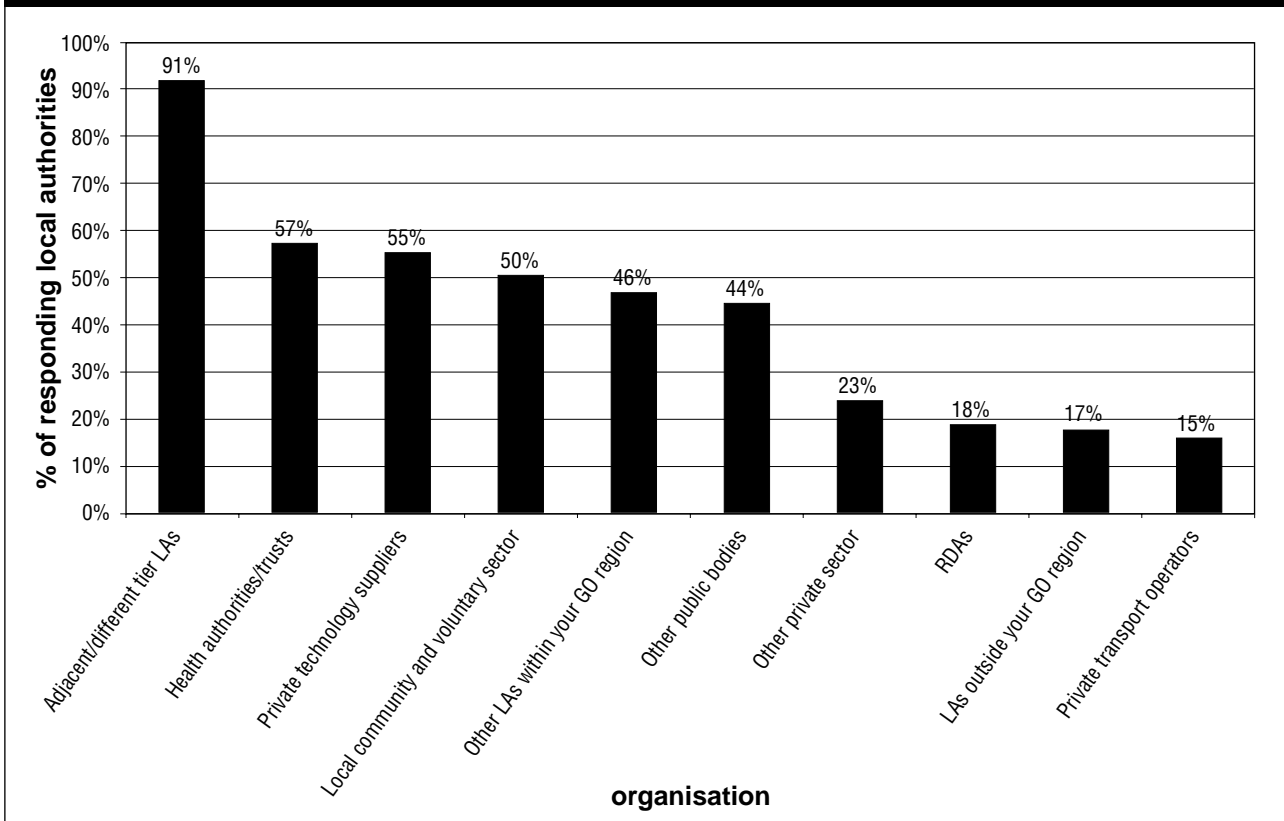
	All local authorities	Counties	Districts	London boroughs	Metropolitan districts	Unitaries
	94%	100%	97%	84%	84%	84%
Base	266	28	162	19	25	32

Base: Numbers of each type of local authority responding to the survey

The survey indicates that county and district councils are the most likely types of authority to form partnerships to help them implement e-government. This is no doubt a reflection of the two-tier system (suggesting that districts tend to work with other districts and/or their county council in implementing e-government).

4.2 Range of partner organisations

Chart 3 Which organisation(s) does your authority work in partnership with to help it implement e-government and to achieve the 2005 target?



Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

PUBLIC SECTOR...

From Chart 3 above we can see that a significant majority (91%) of local authorities work in partnership(s) with adjacent/different tier local authorities in relation to e-government. Local authorities also work in partnership with councils that are not adjacent – although to a lesser extent – 46% do so with other local authorities within the same Government Office (GO) region. They do, however, seem far less inclined to work with local authorities outside the same GO region (17%).

It is also common for local authorities to work with health authorities/trusts, as over half (57%) of responding local authorities have e-government partnerships with health bodies.

PRIVATE AND VOLUNTARY SECTORS...

As one might expect, a good proportion of councils are currently working in partnership with private technology suppliers (55%) to help them implement e-government. Exactly half of responding local authorities work in partnership with local community/voluntary sector organisations.

BY TYPE OF AUTHORITY

Table 14 below compares partnership working across the different types of local authority.

Table 14 Types of organisation with which local authorities work in partnership to implement e-government – % of each type of authority

	All local authorities	Counties	Districts	London boroughs	Metropolitan districts	Unitaries
Adjacent/different tier local authorities	91%	93%	94%	81%	86%	85%
Health local authorities/trusts	57%	86%	42%	75%	90%	78%
Private technology suppliers	55%	71%	52%	50%	57%	67%
Local community and voluntary sector	50%	68%	45%	56%	71%	44%
Other local authorities within your GO region	46%	64%	36%	38%	81%	67%
Other public bodies	44%	61%	40%	44%	67%	41%
Other private sector	23%	36%	17%	38%	24%	37%
RDAs	18%	46%	13%	6%	24%	15%
Local authorities outside your GO region	17%	32%	9%	19%	43%	22%
Private transport operators	15%	39%	7%	19%	19%	26%
Base	249	28	157	16	21	27

Base: Numbers of each type of local authority responding to the survey – e.g. 93% of county councils have a partnership with an adjacent/different tier local authority.

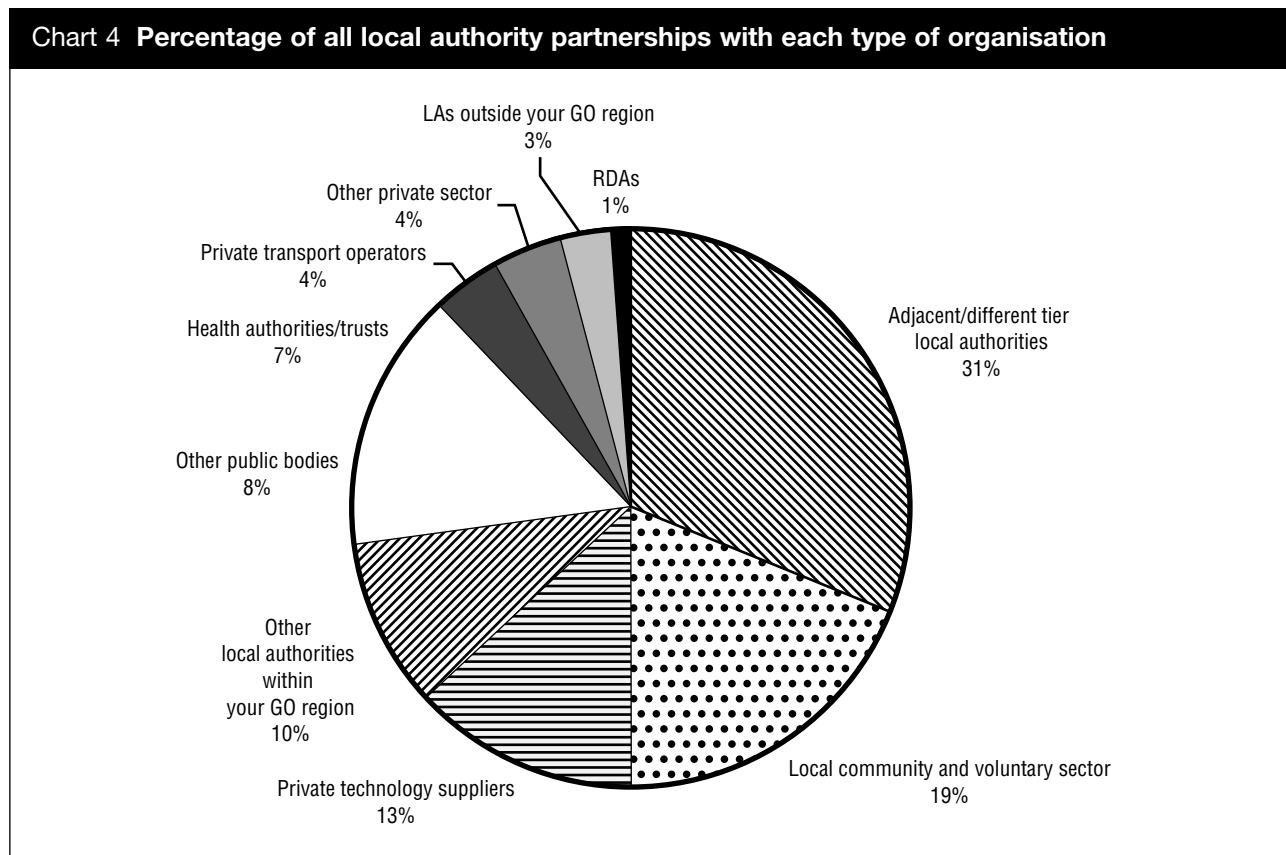
Whilst there are some similarities across the different types of authority – for example working with adjacent/different tier and health authorities is popular across all types – a number of differences also stand out:

- Whilst 94% of district councils work in partnership with adjacent/different tier local authorities, no more than 52% of districts do so with any other type of organisation. This supports our earlier suggestion that districts tend to form e-government partnerships with their county councils. Other types of authority, including counties, have partnerships with a more varied range of organisations.
- It is more likely for metropolitan districts to work with health authorities, whereas the most popular kind of partner organisation for every other type of authority is adjacent/different tier local authorities.
- Metropolitan districts also seem keen to work with other local authorities in the GO region (not adjacent or different tier) local community/voluntary organisations, as 81% and 71% respectively of this type of authority does so.
- More county councils and unitaries have e-government partnerships with private technology suppliers – 71% and 67% respectively compared with 57% of metropolitan districts and 50% of London boroughs.

- County councils are, by far, the most likely to work in partnership with RDAs on e-government, as 46% do so compared with 24% of metropolitan districts (the next highest).

4.3 Number of e-government partnerships

Now thinking about the numbers of local authority partnerships, Chart 4 below shows the different organisations with which local authorities are working in partnership for e-government as a percentage of the total number of partnerships reported in this survey.



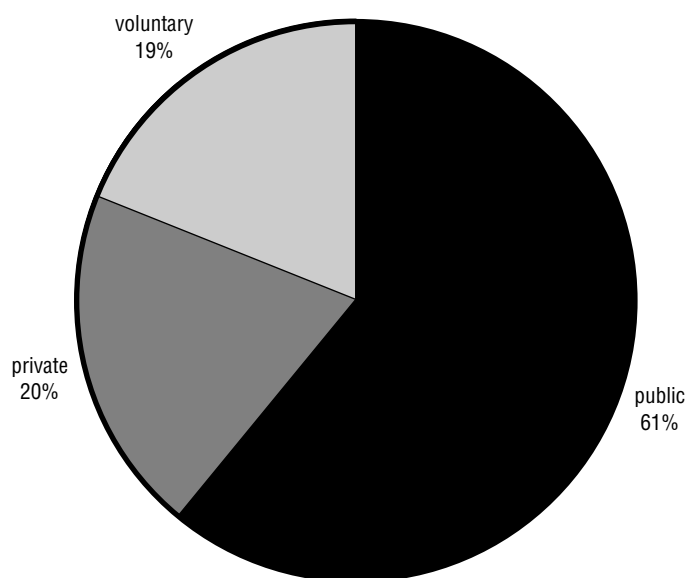
Base: 4083 (total number of e-government partnerships reported in the survey)

This analysis shows that the highest proportion of local authority e-government partnerships (31%) are with adjacent/different tier local authorities. This may suggest that local authorities most often form partnerships to joint deliver mainstream or back office services.

Interestingly, whilst 57% of local authorities have an e-government partnership with health authorities/trusts, only 7% of all partnerships are with health local authorities. In contrast, 50% of local authorities are working in partnership with a local community/voluntary organisation but 19% of all partnerships are with these organisations (the second highest number of partnerships). This may be because an authority tends to have one ‘health partnership’, but several partnerships with community/voluntary organisations. This may be a reflection of the higher number of community/voluntary organisations at the local level.

In summary, 61% of e-government partnerships are with the public sector, 20% are with the private organisations and 19% with community/voluntary sectors.

Chart 5 Percentage of partnerships with the public, private and community/voluntary sectors



Base: 4083 (total number of e-government partnerships reported in the survey)

(It is worth noting that these figures will inevitably include some overlap, particularly in relation to partnerships with adjacent local authorities, as different respondents may be reporting the same partnership, so where one partnership involves three local authorities it may have been recorded three times. Thus the figures for numbers of partnerships may be somewhat higher than in reality. However, it does enable a comparison of the extent to which local authorities are working in partnership with different organisations.)

4.4 Types of partnership arrangement

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of partnership arrangement they have from the following list:

- **Contractual:** partnerships defined by contractual agreement, but specifically excluding joint ownership and contribution and the sharing of risk.
- **Shared service delivery:** where two or more organisations jointly deliver a service.
- **Goals-based coalition:** a commitment between organisations to shared goals and common objectives in a situation where power and responsibility for achieving goals is dispersed between organisations. Such partnerships typically enjoy a loose organisational form, eg joint committee or working party.

- **Strategically co-ordinated services:** partnerships between different organisations to engage jointly in a service planning process that results in a strategic statement of objectives and plans and the commitment to better co-ordinate resource allocation and service delivery.

The results are illustrated in Table 15 below.

Table 15 Type of partnership arrangements local authorities have with different partner organisations

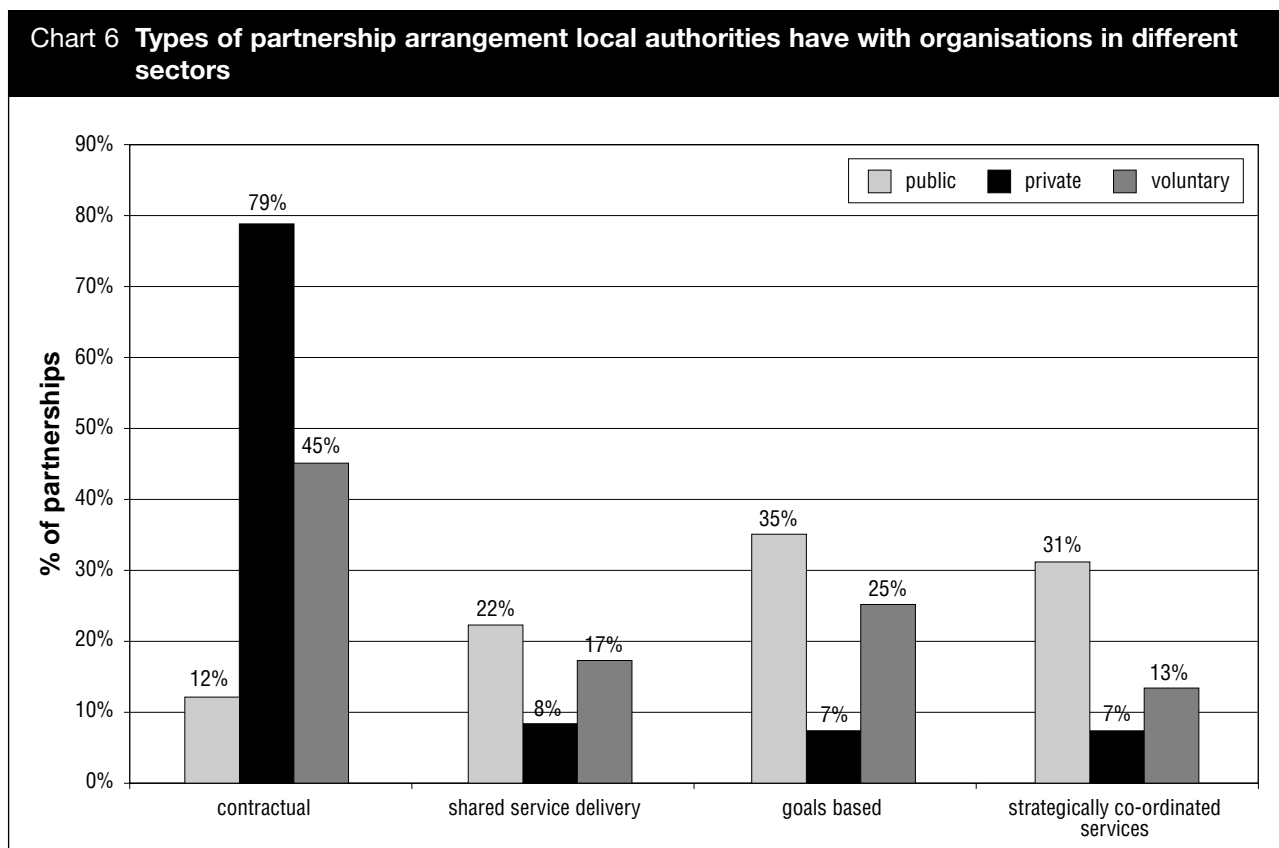
	contractual	shared service delivery	goals-based	strategically co-ordinated services	Base
Adjacent/different tier local authorities	14%	25%	33%	28%	1273
Other local authorities within your GO region	14%	15%	31%	40%	420
Local authorities outside your GO region	5%	11%	66%	18%	122
RDAs	11%	14%	39%	37%	57
Health authorities/trusts	7%	31%	30%	32%	283
Other public bodies	6%	20%	39%	35%	321
Private technology suppliers	89%	3%	3%	5%	522
Private transport operators	82%	7%	5%	5%	164
Other private sector	41%	23%	19%	17%	151
Local community and voluntary sector	45%	17%	25%	13%	770

Base: Numbers of partnerships with each different type of organisation – e.g. 14% of partnerships with adjacent local authorities are contractually-based.

Looking at the different types of organisations specifically, some interesting findings emerge:

- A significant majority of partnerships with the private sector are contractually-based – this is the case with 89% of partnerships with private technology suppliers and 82% of private transport operators.
- Two-thirds (66%) of partnerships with other local authorities outside the GO region are goals-based.
- Partnerships with health authorities are evenly spread across shared service delivery, goals-based and strategically co-ordinated services – about 30% of partnerships with health authorities fall within each of these categories.
- A quarter (25%) of partnerships with local community/voluntary organisations are goals-based

Chart 6 below summarises the results, comparing partnerships with the public, private and voluntary sectors.



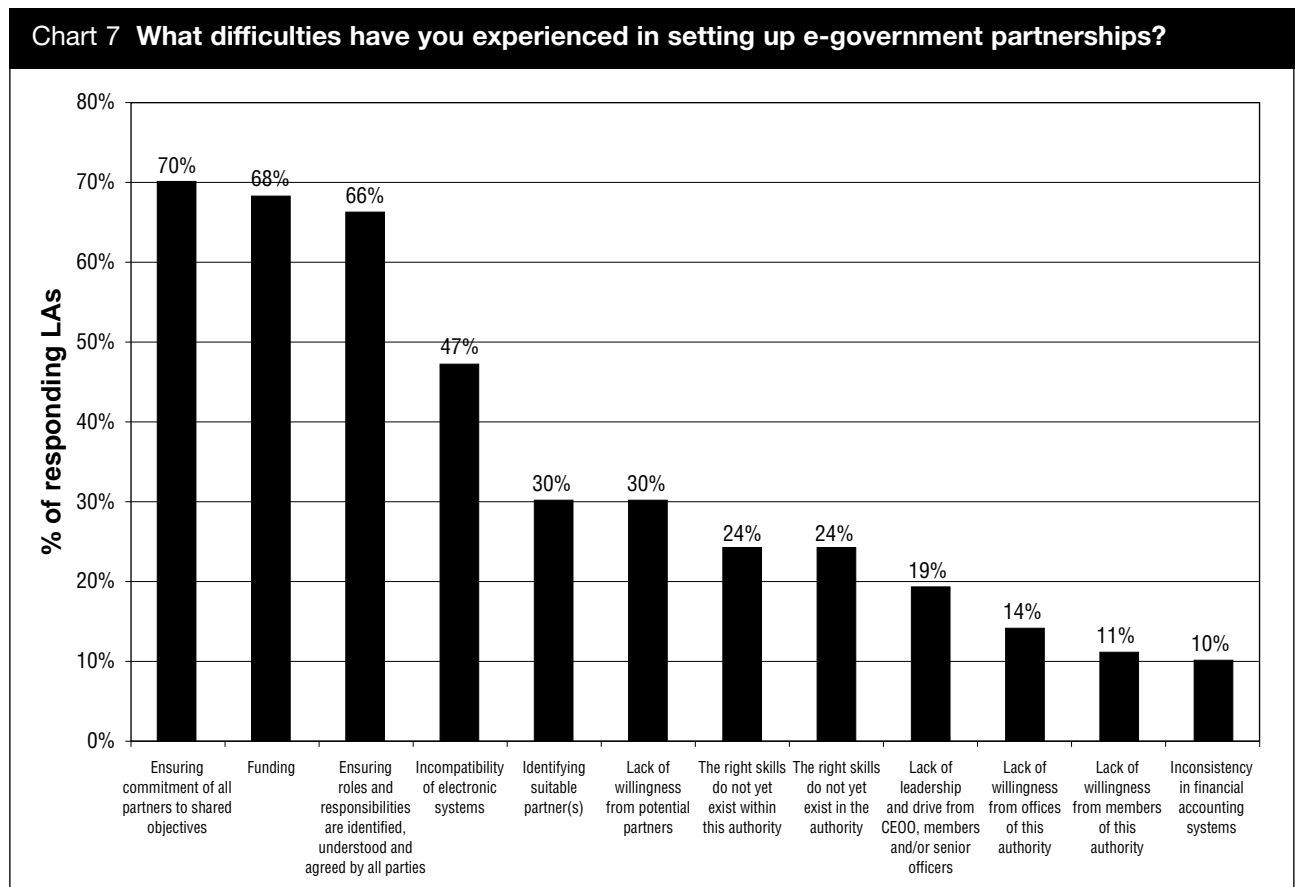
Base: Numbers of partnerships with each sector – e.g. 12% of partnerships with public sector are contractually-based.

We can see that the highest proportion of partnerships with the private sector (79%) and the voluntary (45%) are contractually-based, whereas only 12% (the lowest proportion) of public sector partnerships are contractual. So, as one would expect, local authorities are reluctant to forgo the security of a contract when forming partnerships with the private sector – this is also true with the voluntary sector, but to a lesser extent. Local authorities are far more likely to have goals-based partnerships (35%) or arrangements to strategically co-ordinate services (31%) with public sector organisations.

4.5 Difficulties in setting up e-government partnerships

67% of local authorities have encountered difficulties in setting up partnerships in relation to e-government. Interestingly, the highest proportions are of county councils (79%) and district councils (68%) reporting difficulties, whilst the lowest proportion are amongst metropolitan districts (56%). Yet, as reported earlier, more county and district councils are involved in some sort of e-government partnership. It is, perhaps, the case that counties and districts pursue the partnership option more often and so are more likely to have

encountered difficulties. Given they report the highest level of partnership activity in spite of these problems, it would appear that these difficulties are not insurmountable.



Base: 182 (no. of local authorities having experienced difficulties in setting up e-government partnerships)

Local authorities appear to face a variety of difficulties in setting up partnerships to implement e-government. Most often such difficulties relate to agreeing objectives and responsibilities and obtaining the necessary funding:

- 70% of local authorities reported that it is difficult to ensure commitment of all partners to shared objectives and 66% have had problems identifying roles and responsibilities and ensuring they are understood and agreed by all parties.
- 68% report that funding presents them with difficulties. It is perhaps curious that local authorities cite this as an obstacle given the access to resources and investment is often a reason for pursuing the partnership option with the private sector⁵ in the first place.

Local authorities would seem to perceive more willingness amongst their own officers and members to work in partnership on e-government than there is from potential partner organisations. 30% of local authorities indicate that a lack of willingness within potential partners inhibits partnership working, whereas less than 14% of local authorities have identified the same lack of willingness from their own officers and members. That said, 19% of local authorities cite a lack of leadership and drive from chief executive, members

5 Local Authorities Partnerships and Best Value – An Overview of the First Year: Paper 7, DTLR/Newchurch Partnership Series, DTLR 1999

and/or senior officers as presenting them with difficulties when trying to set up e-government partnerships. In addition to problems around ‘attitudes’, almost a quarter (24%) of local authorities have found that a lack of skills (both in authority and partner organisations) can present difficulties when trying to work in partnership.

Setting up e-government partnerships would also appear to present local authorities with some logistical problems: most noticeably, almost half (47%) of local authorities have found that incompatible electronic systems can cause problems. However, relatively few local authorities (10%) have experienced difficulties due to inconsistent financial/accounting systems.

4.6 Procurement of systems and services to support the implementation of e-government

Table 16 below indicates that a majority of local authorities find it straightforward to find suitable suppliers of e-government technologies, applications and services. 54% of local authorities suggested that it is ‘easy’ (ranked 4 or 5) to identify such suppliers, whereas only 18% indicated that it is ‘not easy’ to do so (ranked 1 or 2).

Table 16 Please indicate on scale of 1 to 5 the extent to which the statement “it is easy to identify suitable suppliers of e-government technologies, applications and services” reflects the experience of your authority overall in procuring e-systems and services

	5 (strongly reflects our experience)	4	3	2	1 (does not reflect our experience at all)	weighted score
easy to identify suppliers	13%	41%	25%	15%	3%	914

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

Furthermore, many local authorities appear fairly confident of being able to specify requirements in e-government contracts. 42% suggested that they do **not** find it difficult (ranked 1 or 2) to specify requirements when procuring IT/e-government systems, compared with only 21% who have experienced difficulties (ranked 4 or 5) specifying ICT contracts. See Table 17 below for more detail.

Table 17 Please indicate on scale of 1 to 5 the extent to which the statement “the authority has found it difficult to specify its requirements in e-government contracts” reflects the experience of your authority overall in procuring e-systems and services

	5 (strongly reflects our experience)	4	3	2	1 (does not reflect our experience at all)	weighted score
difficult to specify requirements	3%	18%	34%	32%	10%	857

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

Whilst local authorities appear relatively confident about their own abilities, they are more divided over whether suppliers actually understand the authority’s requirements. Almost a quarter (24%) of local authorities suggest that suppliers do understand local authorities’ needs (ranked 4 or 5) and 31% believe the opposite (ranked 1 or 2). The highest single proportion of local authorities (43%) seem reluctant to commit to either view (ranked 3).

Table 18 Please indicate on scale of 1 to 5 the extent to which the statement “suppliers of e-government technologies, applications and services display a good understanding of the authority’s aspirations, requirements and constraints” reflects the experience of your authority overall in procuring e-systems and services

	5 (strongly reflects our experience)	4	3	2	1 (does not reflect our experience at all)	weighted score
suppliers understand the authority’s requirements	1%	23%	43%	26%	5%	763

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

These findings are emphasised by the weighted score analysis (see last column in Tables 16-18). Weightings were calculated by multiplying the number of times a factor was allocated a score of five (highest), four, three and so on by a simple weighting (e.g. those statements allocated a score of five received a weighting of five and so on.) The higher the weighted score – the higher the level of agreement with the statements. As ‘easy to identify suppliers’ has the highest weighted score, this implies more local authorities agreed with this statement. In contrast, ‘suppliers understand local authorities requirements’ received the lowest weighted score, which implies the fewest local authorities believe this to be true.

CHAPTER 5

E-government processes

5.1 Consulting the public and local businesses

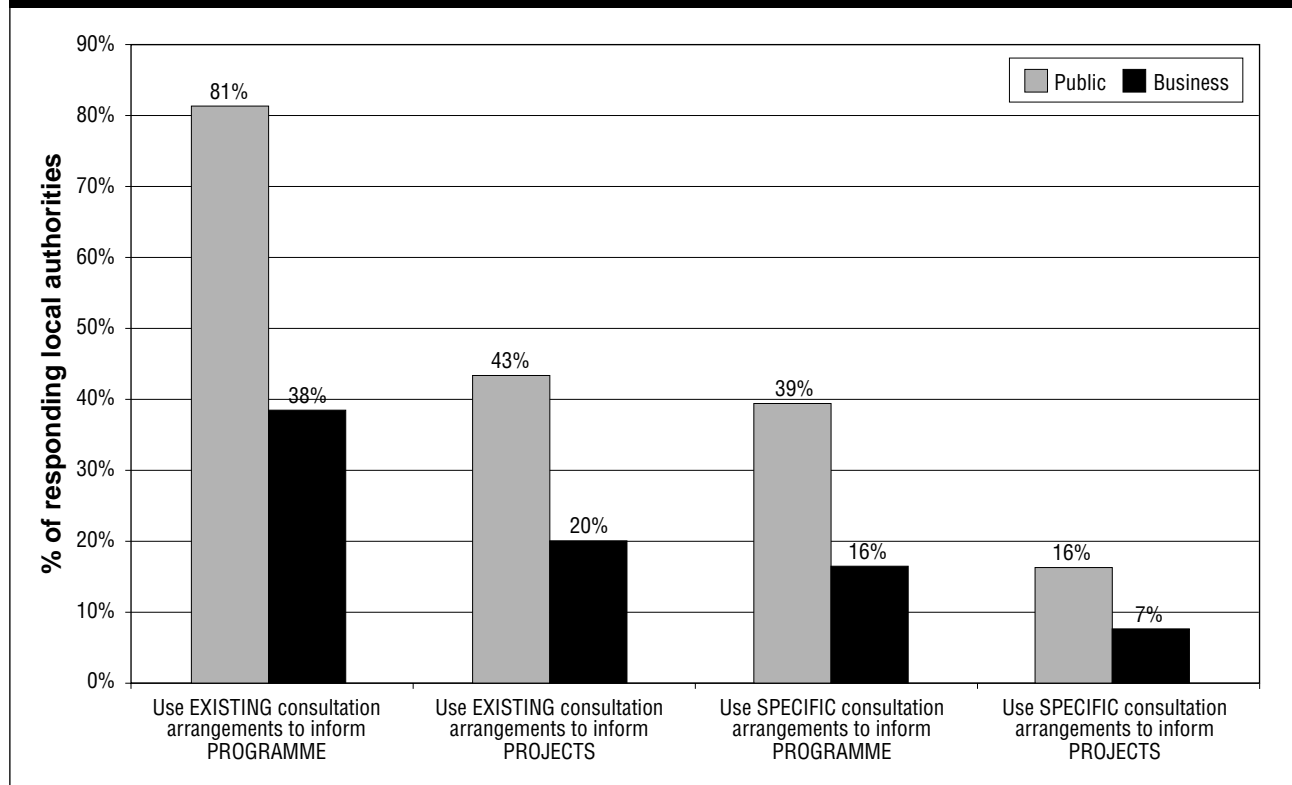
PUBLIC

Most local authorities seem keen to involve the public in developing their e-government programme. 90% of respondents to the survey indicated that they are seeking to engage the public on the way they implement e-government. This is consistent across all types of authority: 88%+ of each type of authority is seeking to involve the public in developing their e-government programmes – figures are highest for metropolitan districts, all of which currently consult local people on this issue.

The survey indicates that local authorities are more likely to use existing public consultation arrangements or data to inform their e-government programme and to do so at the general programme, rather than at the specific project, level. 81% of local authorities use existing mechanisms and data to inform their e-government programme, whereas less than half that number (39%) have employed specific consultation arrangements to engage the public with relation to their whole e-government programme. In terms of consulting on individual e-government projects, 43% of local authorities use existing arrangements and data and only 16% have set up specific consultation procedures. These findings are consistent across all types of authority.

However, the results suggest that in the future approaching a third of local authorities will be taking a more formal approach to obtaining the public's views on their e-government programmes as around 30% of local authorities report that they are developing specific arrangements to inform their e-government programme and projects.

Chart 8 How are you incorporating the views of the public and local businesses in developing your e-government programme



Base: 266 (all authorities responding to the survey)

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Around half (48%) of local authorities responding to the survey are making efforts to involve local businesses in the development of their e-government programme. Comparing results across the different types of authority, it seems that more county councils are seeking to involve local businesses in their development of e-government: 61% of counties are doing so currently, compared with, say, 56% of metropolitan districts and 48% of London boroughs.

As with consulting the public, it is more likely that local authorities use existing arrangements to engage local businesses on e-government and that they consult on their e-government as a whole (38%) – more so than on individual projects (20%). These findings are broadly consistent for each type of authority.

It seems that local authorities, in the future, might increase their use of specific exercises to consult businesses on the development of e-government: 27% of local authorities reported that they are developing specific arrangements to consult businesses on their e-government programme and 23% intend to do so for e-government projects.

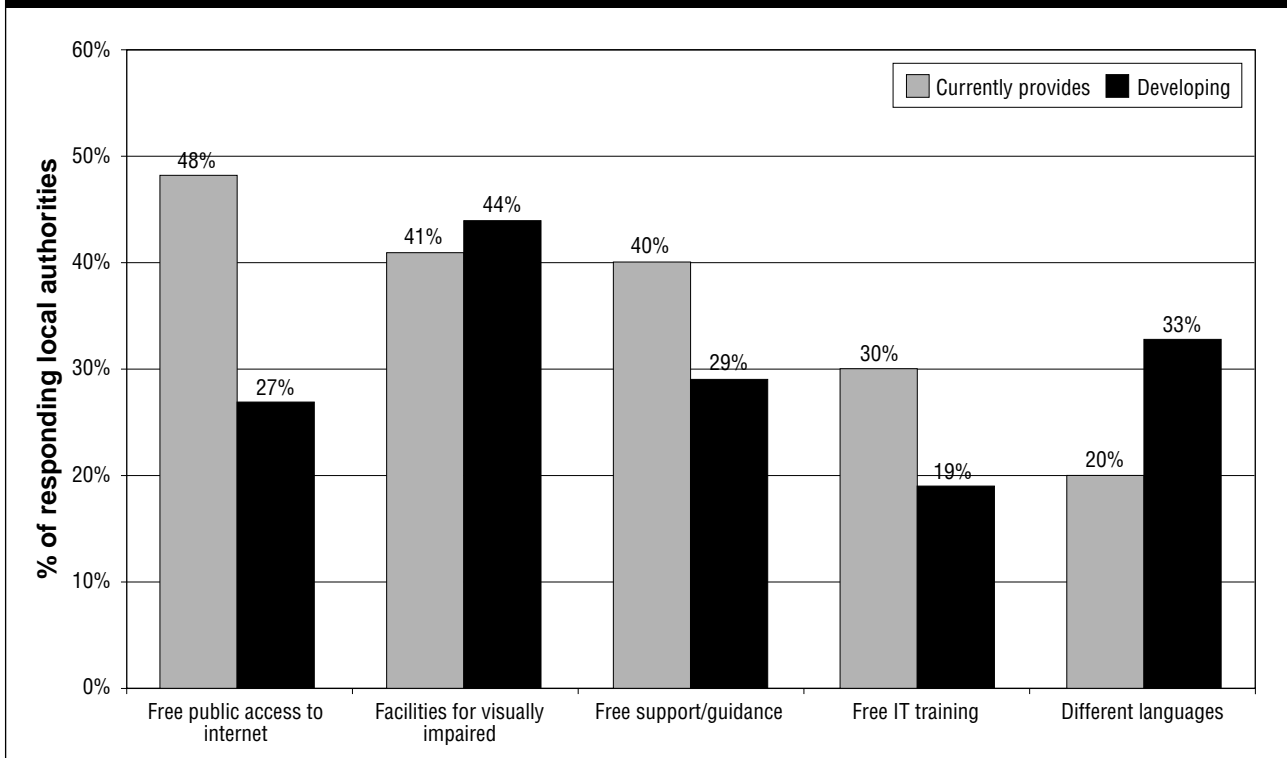
As mentioned above more local authorities consult the public than engage local businesses on their e-government programmes: this is probably due to the emphasis on service quality and improvement and the role of public perceptions and satisfaction in measuring an authority’s performance.

5.2 Promoting access to e-enabled information and services

Not only are local authorities seeking to understand what citizens want in terms of e-government, but they are also trying to provide e-information and e-services in ways that meets their needs. Much has been made of the “digital divide” – of the potential for technology to reinforce social exclusion by making it harder for some people to access services and participate in democracy. Many people cannot afford computers (and other IT equipment), do not know how to use them, are intimidated by them, or prefer other ways of talking to their council. But there is the potential to overcome these obstacles – by providing a *range* of e-enabled service channels, alongside access to internet technology and skills for all those who want them.

The survey asked local authorities how they might have considered issues around social inclusion when designing and developing e-government access channels, e.g. call centres, internet, one-stop-shop, etc. The results are illustrated on Chart 9 below.

Chart 9 How has your authority considered social inclusion when designing and developing e-government access channels?



Base: 266 (all local authorities responding to the survey)

SO FAR...

Of all the initiatives designed to promote social inclusion provided in the questionnaire, it seems most common for local authorities to provide free public access to the internet or other online services, as almost half (48%) local authorities do so. However, this figure is

skewed somewhat because of the relatively low proportion of district councils that provide free public access to the internet/on-line services. As is shown in Table 19 below, only a quarter (25%) of districts provide free public access compared with (72%+) of each other type of authority. It is likely, however, that county councils may well take the lead on providing free public access, particularly across rural areas – in partnership with the district councils or otherwise. It is also common for free IT access to be provided for the public in libraries, which are a county function.

40% of local authorities overall provide free support or guidance for members of the public trying to access information or use services online. This seems most common amongst county councils (71%) and the least popular amongst district councils (28%). It seems less likely for local authorities to provide free IT training for the public, but approaching one third (30%) do so – one further authority reported that they subsidise such training. The results show quite a contrast between the districts and other local authorities: only 17% of districts provide free IT training, compared with 39% of counties and 56% of metropolitan districts. Again the low proportion of districts providing training may reflect the fact that this is left to larger local authorities (with Education responsibilities) to do so for the area.

Now thinking about those members of the public with more specific needs, 41% of local authorities have considered the needs of the visually/hearing impaired when providing e-enabled access to information and services. This is particularly common amongst London boroughs, as 63% do so, compared with around 40% of all other types of authority.

20% of local authorities present information in different languages via their e-enabled access channels. This figure is higher for London boroughs (42%), but uniformly low across the other authority types – bearing in mind the higher concentration of non-English speaking residents in some London boroughs this is not surprising. Overall, the results suggest that more London boroughs are taking social inclusion into consideration when designing and developing their e-government access channels.

Table 19 How has your authority considered social inclusion when developing e-government access channels? – by type of authority

	All local authorities	London boroughs	County councils	Unitary authorities	Metropolitan districts	District councils
Free public access to internet or on-line services	47%	95%	89%	81%	72%	25%
Presenting information so that it can be used by visually/hearing impaired	41%	63%	46%	44%	41%	38%
Free support/guidance for people accessing information/using services online	40%	63%	71%	59%	48%	28%
Free IT training for public	29%	47%	39%	53%	56%	17%
Presenting online information in different languages	20%	42%	18%	16%	28%	19%
Base	266	19	28	32	25	162

Available capacity and/or funding could play a part here. It will also depend on the extent to which districts are providing e-access channels themselves or in partnership with their county.

IN THE FUTURE...

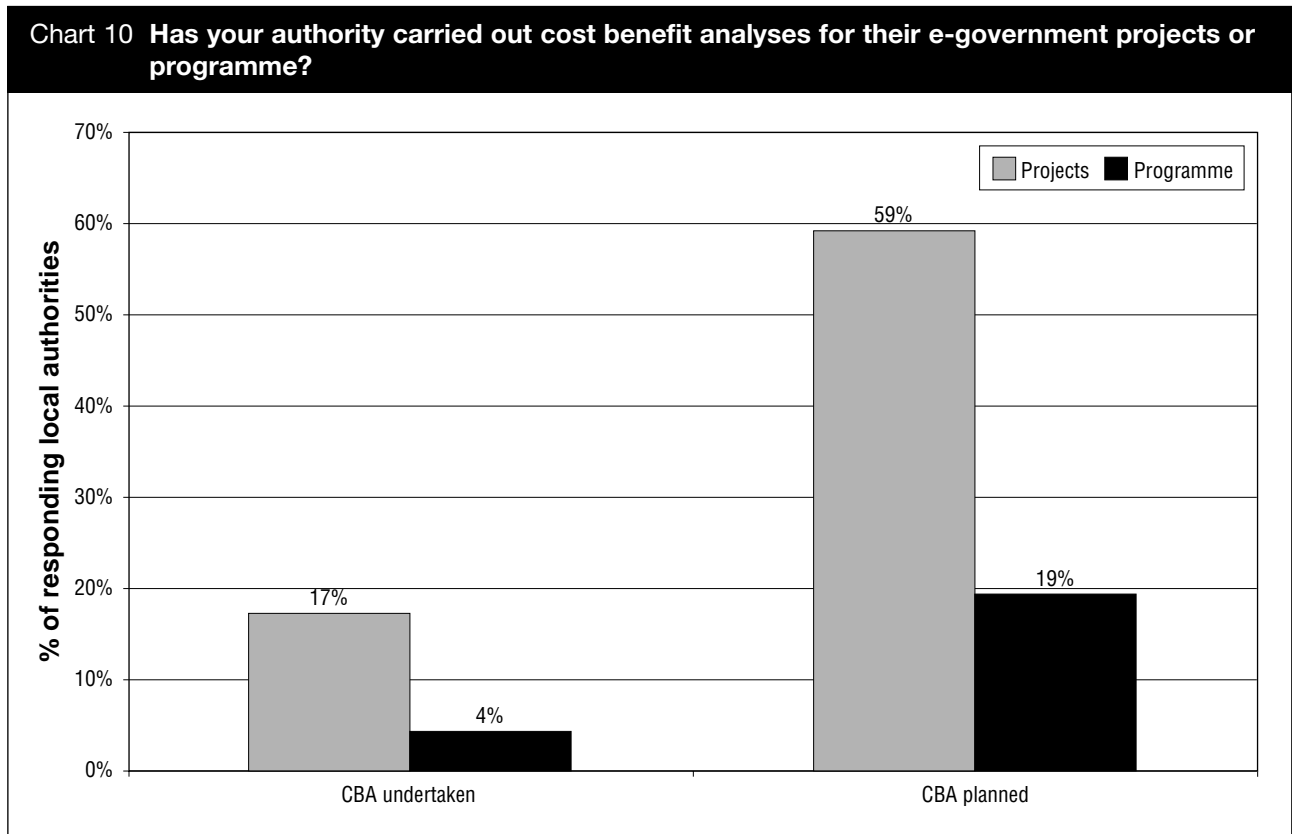
The survey suggests that local authorities will increasingly consider how to provide e-information and e-services in a way that can be used easily by those who are visually/hearing impaired or those whose first language is not English. 44% and 33% of local authorities respectively suggest that, in developing their e-enabled facilities, they are considering ways of ensuring that those who are visually/hearing impaired and those whose first language is not English can use the facilities.

5.3 Cost-benefit analysis

Overall, 86% of local authorities have undertaken, or plan to undertake, some form of cost-benefit analysis (CBA) in relation to the implementation of e-government. All the London boroughs responding to this survey have or plan to undertake a CBA of projects or programme, compared with 96% of county councils, 96% of metropolitan districts and 84% of unitaries and districts.

So far, 20% of all local authorities have already undertaken a CBA of their e-government projects or programme and a further 66% plan to do so. Thus it would seem that, to date, relatively few local authorities have conducted a CBA of e-government projects or programmes as a matter of course, but may do so increasingly in the future.

The survey also reveals that whilst some local authorities are taking steps to assess the costs and benefits associated with individual projects, even fewer are looking at the costs and benefits that might be incurred by their e-government programme as a whole. 17% of local authorities have undertaken CBA in all or most of the projects that make up its e-government programme, and a further 57% plan to do so. But only 4% of local authorities have conducted a comprehensive CBA of their whole e-government programme, with a further 19% planning to do so. This is probably due to the fact that evaluating the costs and benefits of a whole programme is far more complex than doing so for an individual project, but it is equally, if not more, important. That said 37% of London boroughs have already assessed the costs and benefits of all or most of their e-government projects (compared with only 14% of districts and 13% of unitaries). And, 21% of London boroughs have analysed the costs/benefits associated with their e-government programmes (compared with only 9% of unitaries, 4% of counties and no metropolitan districts).



Base: 266 (all local authorities responding to the survey)

5.4 Project and programme management methodologies

Overall, two-thirds of local authorities (67%) use some formal methodology or framework for managing e-government projects or their entire e-government programme. However, in 22% of local authorities, project management is the responsibility of individual managers and there is no corporate approach or procedures for the way e-government projects or programmes are managed.

It is important for all projects to be managed in a consistent way and to commonly agreed standards and the survey shows that 42% of local authorities do this. It is also important that an organisation effectively manages the whole programme to which each of these individual projects contribute – it is essential that someone/group is taking a corporate overview to ensure a programme is meeting required standards and objectives. The survey suggests that fewer (36%) local authorities have in place a formal methodology or framework when managing their e-government programme.

Now thinking about the types of project management methodology that local authorities employ, it seems that over half (55%) of the local authorities (that use some sort of methodology or framework) use Prince II and a further 13% use a modified version of Prince II. This is consistent across all authority-types. 5% of local authorities use MS Project to monitor and manage their e-government projects/programme and 7% of local authorities use some other sort of methodology of framework.

5.5 Risk Analysis

Overall, 80% of local authorities seek to identify and manage risk associated with the implementation of e-government – whether it be on a project-by-project basis or in relation to their entire e-government programme. It seems most likely for county councils and London boroughs to have done so, as 96% and 95% of them respectively do so to some extent.

Table 20 How local authorities are seeking to identify and manage risks associated with their e-government programme

The authority ONLY maintains a risk register for each project or initiative within its e-government programme	32%
The authority ONLY maintains a consolidated risk register covering the whole e-government programme	18%
The authority maintains a risk register for individual projects AND the whole e-government programme	12%
The authority uses some other method to manage risk associated with its e-government programme	18%
The authority does NOT undertake formal risk analysis or management	5%

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

Percentages do not sum to 100% due to non-response to this particular question.

Again, it is more usual for local authorities to formally manage risk on a project-by-project basis, rather than doing so for their e-government programme as a whole. This is illustrated by the fact that, in total, 44% of local authorities maintain a consolidated risk register⁶ for each project or initiative within their e-government programme and 30% of local authorities do so for their whole e-government programme. It does seem somewhat unlikely for local authorities to formally identify and manage risk for BOTH their e-government programme as a whole and their individual projects, as only 12% of local authorities do so.

An additional 18% of local authorities report using less formal ways of assessing risk associated with the implementation of e-government – for example, 7% of local authorities reported that it is part of project management and 2% address this within their IEG statements.

⁶ A risk register is a list of risks with an assessment of likelihood of occurrence, an assessment of the impact on the project or programme and a strategy for mitigating the effects.

5.6 Evaluation strategies

The survey indicates that a high proportion (83%) of local authorities are seeking to evaluate their e-government projects/programme against desired objectives or business case, and two-thirds (66%) are seeking to assess the individual systems and processes within projects or programmes – see Table 21 below for more detail.

Table 21 How local authorities are evaluating their e-government projects and programmes

	Projects	Programmes
The authority formulates a business plan or formally identifies desired objectives for projects/programme as a whole	76%	57%
The authority evaluates each project/whole programme against its desired objectives/business case	83%	64%
The authority evaluates the systems and processes within individual projects/programme as a whole	66%	56%
The authority does all of the above for projects/whole programme	55%	37%
The authority does none of the above for projects/whole programme	4%	18%

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

The survey also reveals that more local authorities conduct evaluations of individual projects, rather than the e-government programme as a whole: 55% of local authorities have all three arrangements in place for their individual e-government *projects* and only 4% use none of these procedures to evaluate their e-government *projects*. Fewer local authorities (37%) have all three arrangements in place to evaluate their whole e-government *programme* and 19% of local authorities have none of these arrangements in place.

CHAPTER 6

Outcomes of e-government

So far this report has concerned processes. Key to understanding the success or benefits of e-government is establishing and measuring its outcomes and impacts. This study makes a first step by looking at the perceived effects of e-government on the local authorities' internal ways of working, as well as on service quality and levels of public involvement in local decision-making. This chapter discusses how local authorities are monitoring such outcomes and what local authorities believe the impacts to have been so far.

6.1 Internal systems and ways of working

MEASURING IMPROVEMENTS IN EFFICIENCY

E-government has the potential to increase the speed and efficiency of internal local authority processes by allowing local authorities to rethink and improve the way the 'back office' works. The survey suggests that almost three-quarters (74%) of local authorities have in place some sort of procedure to measure changes in the efficiency of their internal processes that may have arisen due to e-government:

- 51% of local authorities collate baseline data on the costs of services;
- 40% record the cost per transaction for individual common transactions (e.g. order-delivery cycle, registrations, etc);
- 44% monitor the time taken to process common transactions.

The survey also asked about more advanced measures that local authorities might use to assess the 'effectiveness' of their processes – for example, numbers of failed transactions, transactions which need to be re-processed, complaints about the transaction process, etc. Only a third (33%) of local authorities have in place such measures.

There are no real differences between the different types of authority: no less than 71% of each type of authority has in place some sort of procedure to assess the impact of e-government on the internal efficiency of their authority.

PERCEIVED IMPACTS

Whether through these formal processes or more informal observation, respondents report that e-government has, to varying degrees, impacted on the internal systems, processes and ways of working in their local authorities. These perceived impacts are discussed below and shown clearly in Table 22.

- **Requirements for office space and running costs**

A majority of local authorities (60% and 67% respectively) report that e-government has had no effect on requirements for office space or in office running costs as a result of their e-government programme. Although, of those local authorities that believe there to have been a change in requirements for office space and running costs – more have identified an increase than a decrease. 21% of local authorities reported that e-government has increased their **office space requirements** and only 14% reported a decrease in such requirements. And, in relation to **running costs**, 20% of local authorities reported an increase and only 7% reported a decrease.

- **Staff time and costs of providing information/services**

Local authorities responses are more mixed on the implications for staff time and costs associated with providing information and services electronically. But overall, it seems that where local authorities have identified a change, more believe e-government to have brought about an increase in staff time and costs – the one exception relates to time spent processing transactions. These findings are dealt with in detail below.

Providing information

There is a fairly even split between the number of local authorities (47%) that report e-government has brought about a change in the **cost of providing information** to the public and those who think that e-government has had no impact (43%). Of those local authorities that report a change in the cost of providing information, again more report an increase: 35% of local authorities see e-government as having brought about a rise in these costs and only 12% report a reduction. This may, however, be due to the initial outlay of expenditure required to set up the systems needed to provide information electronically. Also, meeting increased demand for information and services – see below – will require greater resources and funding.

In terms of the impact on **time spent providing information** to the public, the picture is equally mixed – 48% believe e-government has had implications for the amount of time staff spent and 45% report that it has had no effect. Of those local authorities that report a change, more (34%) indicate that staff spend more time providing information to the public as a result of e-government than report that staff time has reduced (14% of local authorities).

Processing transactions

Fewer local authorities (just under a quarter) think that e-government has impacted on the costs and staff time associated with processing transactions. Of the local authorities (24%) reporting a change in the **cost of processing transactions** – there is a fairly even split with 13% reporting an increase in these costs and 11% of local authorities indicating a decrease.

However, of those local authorities (24%) that think e-government had impacted on **staff time spent processing transactions**, more (18%) report that there has been a reduction as a result of e-government and only 6% report an increase in staff time.

- Ability of staff to work more ‘flexibly’

In addition to these implications for cost, staff time and process efficiency, e-government also has the potential to alter how, when and where local authority staff choose to work. The survey shows that e-enabling processes and ways of communicating provides much greater scope for **flexible working**: 61% of local authorities report that their e-government programme has had a positive impact on the ability of staff to work more flexibly. No authority sees it as diminishing its ability to do so. That said, 35% of local authorities believe their e-government programme has had no effect on their ability to work flexibly.

	Increase	No change	Decrease	Net change
Requirements for office space	21%	60%	14%	+7%
Office running costs	20%	67%	7%	+13%
Ability of staff to work more ‘flexibly’	61%	35%	0	+61%
Time spent providing information to public	34%	45%	14%	+20%
Cost of providing information to public	35%	43%	12%	+23%
Time spent processing transactions for public	6%	68%	18%	-12%
Cost of completing transactions for public	13%	66%	11%	+2%

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)

6.2 Service quality

MONITORING THE ACCESSIBILITY, RESPONSIVENESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

Currently...

It would seem vital for local authorities to understand people’s views on the way they want to access services and information to ensure they are meeting their needs and achieving value for money for the authority. Indeed, through the IEG process all councils are now requested to plan, target and monitor the balance of delivery of services through the internet, telephone and face-to-face channels.

The survey shows that 41% of local authorities have established documented processes for obtaining citizen and business views on the **quality** of e-enabled services and communication channels. 37% local authorities collect and analyse information on the **take-up** of electronic services and communication channels. Far fewer local authorities (17%) commission external evaluations of the quality of e-services and communication channels. These findings are broadly consistent across all types of authority.

Developing...

It would seem that more local authorities will be collecting ‘take-up’ data in the future, as 54% of respondents indicated that they are developing such arrangements. Also, 41% of

local authorities are developing documented processes for obtaining citizen and business views on the quality of e-enabled services. The results confirm that local authorities are less inclined to commission *external* evaluations of the quality of e-enabled services, as only 21% are developing such arrangements

PERCEIVED IMPACTS

Local authorities believe that e-government has had a much greater impact externally than on the costs and efficiencies associated with internal processes. Whether through systematic methods or more intuitively, respondents clearly think that e-government has had a positive effect on the way it interacts with the public and how the public are responding to the new opportunities e-government affords. These perceived impacts are discussed below and shown clearly in Table 23.

- **Public access to information and services on-line**

Most local authorities (91% and 76% respectively) see e-government as improving accessibility to local authority information and services. No local authorities report a decrease in accessibility, but some (6% and 19% respectively) indicate that information and services are no more accessible as a result of e-government. The fact that more local authorities have seen an improvement in relation to information may indicate that more local authorities have made progress with providing information, as opposed to services, on-line.

- **Public take-up of on-line information and services**

Many local authorities report an increase in the take-up of e-enabled information and services – this will, of course, be influenced by increased availability of such facilities. 78% indicate there has been a rise in take-up of e-enabled information and 53% report an increase in relation to on-line services. Less than 2% of local authorities suggest e-government has reduced take-up, but 17% and 40% of local authorities respectively report that public take-up of information and of services remains unchanged. As mentioned previously, the fact that fewer local authorities have seen an increase in the take-up of services may be because a lower proportion of local authorities currently provide services on-line.

- **Joint working**

One of the key objectives of the e-government agenda is the increased ability for joint working and joined-up service delivery. It appears that local authorities are taking advantage of the increased scope for joint working that e-government offers. Half (50%) of responding local authorities report a rise in joint provision of information and 31% indicate increased levels of joint service delivery. The latter figure is understandably lower due to the difficulties that may be associated with several agencies jointly delivering a service.

6.3 Impact on local democracy

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF E-GOVERNMENT ON THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Currently...

E-government can allow local authorities to consult and involve people in local decision-making in more varied ways and may help engage those who cannot, or do not want to, communicate/express their views via traditional means. Whilst it seems that local authorities are focusing on the immediate (and more obvious) impacts on service quality, some are beginning to experiment with using ICT for communicating with, and consulting the public on other issues. For example, other research⁸ has shown that 52% of local authorities now have an interactive website for engaging with citizens.

For local authorities to assess the way they are e-enabling communication and participation, they need to have processes to monitor these systems and initiatives. The survey indicates that local authorities are only just beginning to consider the impact e-government might be having on levels of public involvement, as only 32 local authorities (that is 12% of those responding to the survey) reported that they have in place procedures to assess this. (Although, this figure will, in part, reflect the number of local authorities that have so far e-enabled their consultation/participation processes in the first place.) That 12% can be broken down into the following:

- 9% (24 local authorities) assess the impact of e-enabled communication between citizens and elected members, for example, numbers of e-mails received, etc.
- 5% (14 local authorities) currently have processes to measure the extent to which e-enabled channels are helping to improve response rates for consultations, referenda and surveys.
- Even fewer (3% or 9 local authorities) have established processes to measure the extent to which e-government channels are helping to increase the reach of consultations, referenda and surveys.

Developing...

As one might expect, figures for the development of these arrangements are higher with 57% of local authorities reporting that they are developing some arrangement to monitor the impact of e-government on levels of public involvement. More specifically:

- 41% of local authorities are developing processes to assess the impact of e-enabled communication between citizens and elected members.
- 40% are developing systems that will measure the extent to which e-enabled channels are helping to improve response rates for consultations, referenda and surveys.

⁸ Public Participation in Local Government – a survey of local authorities, ODPM 2002

- 37% are developing processes to measure the extent to which e-government channels are helping to increase the reach of consultations, referenda and surveys.

PERCEIVED IMPACTS

Whether through these formal processes or more informal observation, respondents report that e-government has had a positive impact on the level of public involvement in local decision-making processes. (See Table 23 for more detail.) Fewer local authorities (35%) believe e-government to have impacted on levels of public involvement in decision-making than believe there to have been implications for information/service provision. However, of those local authorities that report a change, significantly more (34%) report an increase in the level of public participation, as a result of their e-government programme, than report a fall (only 1%).

Table 23 Impact of e-government on service delivery and local democracy				
	Increase	No change	Decrease	Net change
Number of ways public can access information	91%	6%	0	+91%
Number of ways public can access services	76%	19%	*	+76%
Public take-up of e-enabled information	78%	17%	*	+78%
Public take-up of e-enabled services	53%	40%	1%	+52%
Joint provision of information	50%	43%	1%	+49%
Joint delivery of services	31%	61%	1%	+30%
Public participation/involvement in decision-making	34%	58%	1%	+33%

Base: 266 (local authorities responding to the survey)
 * = less than 0.5%.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

This research provides a snapshot of the progress local authorities are making in terms of implementing e-government and in preparation for the 2005 target. This survey was undertaken at an early point in terms of the e-government agenda, given that most central government policies and initiatives have been introduced since 2001. A more detailed evaluation of the processes local authorities are putting in place to implement e-government, conducted by University of Newcastle, will be published in summer 2003.

Strategy and leadership

Local authorities seem to recognise that e-government has far reaching implications for the way they operate and how they achieve their organisational objectives. The survey reveals that e-government is often reflected in a number of different local plans and strategies, suggesting that local authorities consider e-government to be a tool for facilitating the achievement of a variety of objectives and targets. Local authorities obviously recognise the importance of having strong leadership to drive forward the implementation of e-government, as almost all local authorities have a senior officer e-champion and an elected member e-champion.

Capacity and training

The capacity of officers and members to understand and deliver e-government will affect how well and how quickly local authorities progress. Almost three-quarters (72%) of local authorities report that their officers and/or members lack sufficient skills and understanding in relation to e-government – particularly relating to strategic issues and project management. But local authorities have in place a variety of arrangements for addressing these skills gaps: these include providing training; seeking advice from external organisations; and, working in partnership.

In addition to skills and understanding, officers and members need the right tools to help them meet the requirements of e-government. The survey shows that local authorities provide a range of ICT facilities to their officers and member. However, it seems that officers and members are not universally provided with their own PC, e-mail, access to internet, etc – instead it seems that local authorities prioritise provision of ICT facilities depending on nature of an individual's role and responsibilities. In 70% and 41% of local authorities respectively over three-quarters of officers and over three-quarters of members have their own PC and in 68% and 63% of local authorities respectively over three-quarters of officers and of members have a personal e-mail address.

E-government processes

The survey provides a mixed picture of whether, and how effectively, local authorities have put in place the processes or frameworks suitable to support the implementation e-government. Whilst 90% and 48% respectively of authorities consult the public and businesses on their e-government programme, authorities are more varied in the extent to which they have in place the right management processes – for example, cost-benefit analysis, risk management, evaluation, etc. Where these management processes are in place, it seems that they are often carried out on an informal basis, and tend to be restricted to individual projects – far fewer local authorities seem to be putting in place the same processes for their e-government programme as a whole.

Outcomes of e-government

Although IT may have been used in some local authorities since the 1990s, comprehensive e-government is a very new agenda and local authorities are still in the early days of implementation. Consequently, outcomes and impacts are only just beginning to emerge. That said, most local authorities believe that e-government has had some positive effects, chiefly around the way local information and services are delivered, and the ability for authority staff to work more flexibly:

- 91% and 76% of local authorities respectively indicate that accessibility to information and to services has improved;
- 78% and 53% respectively report a rise in take-up of local authority information and of services;
- 50% report a rise in joint provision of information;
- 61% suggest that their e-government programme allows staff to work more flexibly.

The survey does, however, reveal that e-government is yet to have the same level of effect on local democracy, as a majority of local authorities (58%) report that levels of public participation remain unchanged.

Local authorities are also less convinced on whether e-government has impacted on the cost and staff time associated with providing information and processing transactions – most local authorities reported no change in these aspects. However, of the local authorities that have identified a change, more believe e-government to have brought about an increase in staff time and costs – the one exception being time spent processing transactions. Initial outlays of expenditure may contribute to these views on rises in costs and once new systems are bedded-in, the associated costs and staff time may begin to fall. Given the reported rise in take-up of information and services, we should not overlook the potential for e-government to lead to additional demand and increased costs, even if there are some efficiencies.

Type of authority

Overall, there is little consistent variation between different types of authority in terms of their approach to implementing e-government. However, where some variation in approach exists, it is most often London boroughs that stand out: they seem the most likely to have a corporate e-government strategy (in addition to their IEG statement); provide ICT facilities to more of their officers and members; and, to undertake cost-benefit analysis or risk assessment.

Whilst all local authorities are keen to work in partnership (particularly with adjacent/different tier local authorities) to help them implement e-government, almost all county (100%) and district councils (97%) have e-government partnerships, and are more likely than any other type of authority to work in partnership with adjacent/different tier local authorities. This suggests that local authorities in two-tier areas are particularly keen to exploit existing links and relationships.

There appears to be no consistent variation between the different types of authority regarding emerging impacts and outcomes, indicating that local authorities have achieved mixed results from their e-government programmes. This suggests that progress is not linked to type of authority, but more likely to specific approach or local circumstance. The programme evaluation, being conducted by University of Newcastle, draws upon detailed case study research and will explore more closely relationships between approach and outcome.

Overview

Local authorities recognise the objectives and potential benefits of e-government (particularly in terms of service delivery) and understand the challenges that e-government presents. They are, however, cautious about making radical and costly changes. This coupled with current capacity constraints may explain why many local authorities seem to favour a piecemeal approach to the implementation of e-government and are making changes in a more ad-hoc and informal way. That said, local authorities are beginning to see benefits in terms of access to, and take-up of local information and services, as well as more opportunities for joint and flexible working. Further surveys will allow us to watch the progress made by local authorities in developing e-government in the future and to understand how they overcome the obstacles they face in doing so.

ANNEX A

Technical note

This was a self-completion survey of e-champions or equivalent in all local authorities in England conducted between August and November 2002.

Questionnaire piloting, response monitoring and reminder activity, coding and data input, and delivery of data files were managed by McCallum Layton. Questionnaires were initially dispatched by ODPM by e-mail, along with a mailing of the IEG2 guidance.

The project timescales were as follows:

Pilot recruitment and questionnaire mailout	8 – 9 Jul
Pilot follow-up, by telephone	15 – 19 Jul
Pilot feedback and questionnaire finalisation	22 – 26 Jul
Mainstage dispatch 1 Aug Initial cut-off date	27 Sept
First reminder (with questionnaire) dispatch, by e-mail	4 Oct
First reminder cut-off date	16 Oct
Second reminder, by telephone	21 – 31 Oct
Second reminder cut-off date	15 Nov
Final cut-off for returns	29 Nov

The pilot stage

17 local authorities were recruited to the pilot and a full response was obtained from 12 of them.

In each case, McCallum Layton telephoned the councils and identified, via the Chief Executive's secretary, who would be an appropriate person to speak to initially about the survey. These individuals were asked to attempt to complete the questionnaire and an appointment was made to call back and review how they found it.

Some respondents found the questionnaire generally straightforward to complete themselves; others felt that it would require input from several other people. This would no doubt depend on the nature of the council and the teams involved in e-government. Three commented that reviewing the questionnaire was a useful reminder of the various issues they need to be working on to meet the targets; several commented that they would be keen to see the survey results, which they expect to enable them to benchmark their own progress.

A number of amendments were made to the questionnaire as a result of the pilot.

The breakdown of pilot local authorities in terms of council type was as follows:

	Recruited	Feedback obtained from
District	6	6
County	3	1
London Borough	2	2
Metropolitan Borough	3	2
Unitary	3	1

The job titles of those contributing feedback to the pilot were:

Chief Executive
 Corporate Director
 Director of Services
 Head of Strategic Planning
 Head of Computer Services
 Assistant Director – Information Systems
 E-business Manager
 E-government Manager
 E-government Co-ordinator
 Borough IT Manager
 Information Management Officer
 Strategy Assistant

Response

By the end of the survey period, we received responses from 266 local authorities, representing a response rate of 69%.

Response rate progress over the various stages of the survey were as follows:

By:	Response rate
Initial cut-off date (27 Sept)	28%
E-mail reminder cut-off date (16 Oct)	40%
Telephone reminder cut-off date (15 Nov)	62%
Final cut-off (29 Nov)	69%

Total response rates by authority type were:

	Total	Response rate
County council	34	82%
Metropolitan district	36	69%
Unitary authority	47	68%
District council	239	68%
London borough	33	58%

By region, response rates were:

	Total	Response rate
South East	75	77%
Yorks & Humber	22	73%
North West	46	72%
East Midlands	46	70%
Eastern	55	69%
South West	52	69%
West Midlands	38	61%
London	34	59%
North East	25	56%