

ANNEX A - Application for Performance Standards Funding

This form should be completed in Word.

Please refer to all relevant guidance notes in annexes B, C and D before starting to complete the form.

Part 1 – basic project information

Local Authority name:

Uttlesford District Council

Project name:

Home Working

Application type:

Single LA with other partner(s)

Project category:

Introduction of more flexible ways of working

Linked projects:

Installation of a replacement Unix server – Uttlesford District Council only.
Installation of workflow and upgrades to document imaging – Uttlesford District Council and Bromsgrove District Council.
Staff training – Uttlesford District Council only.

High-level summary of project:

The Housing Benefit Sections of Uttlesford and Bromsgrove District Councils will work together to implement home working in order to improve staff retention & recruitment, reduce absenteeism and increase staff performance and productivity. In so doing, both councils expect to see an improvement in key performance indicators and the resultant service to the public.

The project will build upon the work Uttlesford has already undertaken in this area, where it has built a robust home-working platform for its elected members. It has also piloted home-working within its Planning Department.

Both councils stand to gain from working together, by sharing ideas and expertise, developing homeworking policies and practices and by pooling implementation resources.

High-level costs of project:

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Amount requested from DWP Re UDC Re BDC	0	37,230 38,900	0
Matched funding from lead LA (UDC – part cash, part staff time)	0	18,620	0
Matched funding from LA2 (BDC – staff time only)	0	8,450	0
Matched funding from LA3			
Other funding from lead LA	0	0	0
Other funding from LA2	0	0	0
Other funding from LA3			
Overall cost	0	103,200	0

Special treatment request (if applicable):

Bromsgrove District Council request that, in view of their lower quartile position & lack of available funding, that the requirement to contribute 1/3rd of the cost of the proposed project be waived.

Local authority partners:

LA2	Uttlesford District Council
LA3	Bromsgrove District Council

Other partners / suppliers:

Name	Type of involvement	Level of commitment
Enline PLC	Technical Consultants for Uttlesford District Council.	Will provide technical expertise as required.

Part 2 – detailed project information (business case):

How the project will work:

Uttlesford District Council (UDC) and Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) working together, will develop technical and personnel solutions for homeworking by benefits staff.

Despite being in different regions, the Councils have much in common in terms of benefit caseloads, population size & prosperity and staffing levels. They also face severe budget constraints. However, BDC is currently in the bottom quartile of performing councils whilst UDC is in the upper quartile. BDC has already taken steps to improve this position; through internal initiatives, by establishing contact with UDC and through arranging for the DWP Help Team to visit in January 2004 (as part of the 7th tranche of assistance). The DWP Team will help identify improvements in methods of working and overall performance. Critical to BDC's success will be additional investment in new technology.

Although UDC is a top-quartile performing Council, it has a policy of seeking continuous improvement and feels that further improvement can be made, particularly in respect of accuracy of claims processing. It wishes to share its approach with BDC and is confident it can learn much in return.

The two authorities will jointly develop homeworking, drawing upon the experiences & best practice in the two organisations. The Councils face similar problems regarding recruitment, retention & absenteeism. Recruitment and retention are particular problems, because both councils are in rural areas close to large centres of employment (for UDC, Cambridge and London are within commuting distance, whilst for BDC, Birmingham is within commuting distance). Both councils are therefore competing with many other potential employers, many paying enhanced market rates. Consequently, both UDC & BDC find it difficult, if not impossible, to recruit experienced, skilled assessment staff.

To overcome this problem it is important that both councils offer staff improved, flexible methods of working. Significant amongst these flexibilities is home-working. It is also felt that home-working will improve staff retention, particularly if staff can organise their working day around child care and other responsibilities. It will also encourage applications from those who may not otherwise be attracted to working for the Councils.

Performance Standards funding will enable UDC & BDC to develop the technical architecture and purchase the hardware, software and furniture necessary for home working. The bid is based upon the following number of staff working from home, for at least part of a week, or on a rotational basis:

UDC – 10 staff.

BDC – 7 staff.

These numbers have been derived from surveys of staff carried out at the two authorities.

To achieve home-working, UDC and BDC will require the following investment:-

* Laptops, docking stations, keyboards, flat screens, printers & software (Office 2000, ICLipse, citrix client licences etc) for all homeworkers. Laptops have been chosen in

preference to PCs, as they will be easier for the two IT Sections to support i.e. home visits will not be required, as faulty equipment can be brought into the offices for repair.

* Improved telephony, including, where appropriate, call routing.

* Broadband provision into homeworkers' houses. Where broadband is not available, ISDN will be used, along with an unmetered Internet service.

* Remote authentication & VPN software to maintain the security of the councils internal networks.

As pre-requisites to the introduction of home-working, it will be necessary for both councils to have implemented workflow and to have improved their Intranet services (to enable staff to keep in touch with developments within the organisation).

Also as part of the project, it will be necessary to develop formal homeworking policies at the two councils to ensure that homeworkers are properly supervised and supported. This will require the close involvement of the respective Personnel Departments. It will also be necessary for risk assessments to be carried out at the employees' homes.

Option analysis:

Option 1 – The preferred option

High Level Costs – see earlier section.

Summary SWOT Analysis of option

Strengths

1. Uttlesford have a proven technical solution already in place.
2. Visiting staff, who spend the majority of their day visiting claimants, can often work more efficiently by using their home as a base rather than the office. This is particularly true in a large rural area such as Uttlesford.

Weakness

1. UDC's Unix server is not fast enough to support home working.
2. Not all staff may have a suitable space at home to accommodate a 'home office' that meets health and safety requirements.
3. Homeworking is not suitable for all staff. Some may find the isolation & required self-discipline difficult.

Opportunities

1. Improved productivity & output (quality and accuracy) – there is evidence that
2. homeworking can significantly increase an employee's productivity (*research has concluded that working from home can boost productivity by up to 30%*).
3. Reductions in staff turnover, recruitment costs and absenteeism.
4. Can be used to extend the hours customers can access services.
5. Enables more efficient use of office accommodation, through desk-sharing etc.
6. There are opportunities for environmental gains, for example, through reduced home to office journeys.

Threats

1. Wasted investment through inadequate implementation.
2. Technical problems due to the somewhat complex nature of the IT solution required.
3. Efficiency / performance improvements not realised.
4. Homeworking has a negative impact upon working practices within sections.
5. Staff fail to continue with initiative.

Option 2 - Do nothing

High Level Costs – No direct costs, although there are likely to be opportunity costs relating to:

1. Higher than necessary absenteeism.
2. Higher than necessary recruitment costs.

Summary SWOT analysis for doing nothing**Strengths**

1. There are no obvious strengths with this option.

Weaknesses

1. Need to recruit temporary / agency staff, at significantly higher rates of pay than can be afforded by either council.

Opportunities

1. Where experienced assessment staff cannot be recruited, provides opportunities to develop more junior staff and promote from within the council.

Threats

1. Home working would not be achievable without funding.
2. Retention, recruitment & absenteeism would not improve.
3. Productivity would not improve & could possibly, depending upon the employment market, deteriorate.

Risk analysis:

Main risks

1. Wasted investment through inadequate implementation.
2. Technical problems due to the somewhat complex nature of the IT solution required.
3. Efficiency / performance / accuracy improvements not realised.
4. Homeworking has a negative impact upon working practices within sections.
5. Staff fail to continue with initiative.
6. UDC's Unix server is not fast enough to support home working.
7. Not all staff may have suitable space at home to accommodate an 'home office'.
8. Homeworking is not suitable for all staff. Some may find the isolation & required self-discipline difficult.

Risk management plan:

1. Replace UDC Unix server.
2. Implement PRINCE2 project management methodology.
3. Utilise outputs from Pathfinder and national e-government projects.
4. Take the best / successful ideas from both councils.
5. Ensure sufficient management & personnel support for home workers.
6. Develop personnel policies for home working prior to commencement of home working.
7. Performance monitored through management reporting within workflow.

Detailed cost breakdown:

Item	Unit cost	Number	Amount to be spent in		
			2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Hardware					
UDC - Dell D600 Latitude Laptops (or equivalent)	£965 each	10		9,650	
BDC - Dell D600 Latitude Laptops (or equivalent)	£965 each	7		6,760	
UDC - HP desktop laserjet printers	£115 each	10		1,150	
BDC - HP desktop laserjet printers	£115 each	7		800	
UDC - Docking stations	£150 each	10		1,500	
UDC - 15" flat screen	£300 each	10		3,000	
UDC - Keyboards	£10 each	10		100	
BDC - Docking stations	£150 each	7		1,050	
BDC - 15" flat screen	£300 each	7		2,100	
BDC - Keyboards	£10 each	7		700	
UDC - Secure ID tokens	£50 each			500	
BDC - Authentication & Registration Hardware				5,000	

Internally recharged costs					
UDC – IT Staff: Infrastructure set up	£197 per day	20 days		3,940	
UDC – IT Staff: User set up	£197 per day	20 days		3,940	
UDC – Benefits / Personnel Staff	£140 per day	20 days		2,800	
BDC – IT Staff: Infrastructure Development	£175 per day	20 days		3,500	
BDC – IT Staff: User Set Up (2 days each)	£175 per day	14 days		2,450	
BDC – Benefits / Personnel Staff	£125 per day	20 days		2,500	
(calculated on the basis of 2 days IT set up time per homeworker & 20 days benefit management / personnel time to set up policies, carry out H & S assessments etc).					
Software					
UDC - Additional ICLipse licences	£1,017 per lic or £2,982 for 4	10 licences		8,000	
UDC - Additional MS Office licences	£157 each	10 licences		1,570	
UDC - Siteminder licences	£200 each	10 licences		2,000	
BDC - Additional ICLipse licences	as above	7 licences		6,000	
BDC - Additional MS Office licences	£157 each	7 licences		1,100	
BDC - Authentication / Registration software & licences				5,000	
Furniture (workstations, chairs etc)					
UDC	£200 each home	10		2,000	
BDC	£200 each home	7		1,400	

Broadband					
UDC – Engineer install	£210 per install	10		2,100	
UDC – Monthly charges – based upon 500kb/s download speed	£30 per month	10		3,600	
BDC – Engineer install	£210 per install	7		1,470	
BDC – Monthly charges – based upon 500kb/s download speed	£30 per month	7		2,520	
Based upon BT broadband option – other options will be investigated.					
Telephony					
UDC – call routing enhancements				5,000	
UDC – Contingency				5,000	
BDC – Contingency				5,000	
Total Cost					
UDC				55,850	
BDC				47,350	
				103,200	

Project plan:

Key milestone	Date
1. Member approval obtained for UDC / BDC element of funding	February 2004
2. Agree project plan	April 2004
3. Draw up homeworking policies	May 2004
4. Implement home-working on pilot basis, including installation of technical architecture.	October 2004
5. Review home-working policies in light of initial experiences.	March 2005.
6. Roll-out homeworking to all interested staff	By September 2005
Risk assessments	

Review mechanism:

Reports to SMT / Members / Project Sponsors. Monitoring of specific performance targets. Post Implementation Report. Monitoring absenteeism / sickness levels.

Management assurance:

Level of management checks carried out before decision letter issued	+10%
Level of management checks carried out after decision letter issued	%

Outcomes:

Performance Standard in which improvement sought will be achieved	Date	Expected performance without project	Expected performance with project
BV78a – Speed of Processing ~ Average time for processing new claims (in days)	2004/05	UDC – 25 days BDC – 62 days	UDC – 22 days BDC – 30 days
BV78b – Speed of Processing ~ Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances (in days).	2004/05	UDC – 6 days BDC – 17 days	UDC – 5 days BDC – 8 days
BV79a – Accuracy of processing ~ % of cases which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct on the basis of the information available to the determination, for a sample of cases checked post determination.	2004/05	UDC – 97% BDC – 99%	UDC – 98.5% BDC – 99.2%

Other funding:

No other Government funding is being sought in connection with this project.

*Part 3 – statements and contact details***Statement by benefits manager**

I can confirm that this project is dependent on this application being successful, and it will not go ahead without DWP funding. I can confirm that this is not a committed project and that no funds other than those stated in the application form have been set aside already.

I understand that DWP will not normally fund the cost of recruiting or training staff who already work in benefits for another local authority or contractor. I am not seeking funding for such costs unless I have clearly stated so in this application.

I confirm that I will report briefly on progress in delivering this project during the funding period and at the end of the funding period, as required by DWP.

I undertake to report promptly likely underspend or failure to deliver the project, to allow funds to be reallocated to another authority.

I confirm that I am seeking funding for the LA contribution to this project. If I am unable to obtain LA contributory funding to allow this project to go ahead in full, I will return to DWP their contribution to the project.

I confirm that the statements made in this application form are true.

Signature of benefits manager	
Name:	Mike Brean
Position:	Revenue Services Manager

Statement by responsible finance officer

I support the statements made here by the benefits manager.

I confirm that we are taking the necessary action to obtain our (and any other local authority or third party) contribution to the costs of this project as set out in this form.

Signature of responsible finance officer	
Name	John Dickson, Director of Resources

Contact details

Postal address of benefit manager	Mike Brean, Revenues Services Manager Uttlesford District Council Council Offices London Road Saffron Walden Essex CB11 4ER
Postal address of responsible finance officer (if different)	As above

Further information:

Name	John Mercer
Position	Head of IT & Anti-Fraud Services
Email	jmercer@uttlesford.gov.uk
Telephone number	01799 510421