

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL IMPROVES PERFORMANCE AND COST EFFECTIVENESS WITH BS 11000 CERTIFICATION FROM SGS UNITED KINGDOM LTD

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Durham County Council's successful work with neighbouring councils and external contractors has led to Durham being one of the first authorities in the UK to achieve BS 11000, the Collaborative Business Relationship standard.

SGS is one of the UK's few Institutes for Collaborative Working (ICW) nominated certification bodies to provide auditing for BS 11000.

SGS secured the works through competitive tender and were the obvious choice for Durham County Council for supporting them in developing effective collaborative business relationships and compliance with BS 11000.

In December 2014, along with all other highway authorities, Durham County Council was invited to complete a self-assessment questionnaire as part of the Department for Transport's Incentive Fund, which was issued in 2016/17. They were successful in their incentive fund bid and attained the maximum budget settlement, and BS 11000 certification was a key component for their success.

Certification has also allowed Durham County Council to formalise their existing collaborative relationship with their framework providers further enhancing their effective management of a mixed economy approach to service delivery.

Durham County Council Regeneration and Local Services has always tried to promote collaborative working with neighbouring authorities and we have recently led the development of the North East Highways Alliance, which has opened up opportunities for mutual assistance, sharing of resources and the achievement of efficiency savings for all member councils. This mutual assistance agreement led by Durham County Council provides a platform



where member councils can share capacity, knowledge and experiences with each other. Some of the other projects include opportunities for collaborative procurement in areas such as street lighting columns and LED lanterns, which have been very successful so far.

Durham's in-house provider, Highway Services, has 250 operational staff which is supplemented by a supply chain of competitively procured sub-contractors and mutual assistance providers from neighbouring authorities. This mixed economy approach ensures that the Council obtains the most economical and efficient service delivery provision. The in-house team offers surety to deal with reactive maintenance, winter maintenance and respond to severe weather events. The external providers supplement this resource and offer support as demands dictate.

HOW CERTIFICATION HAS BENEFITTED THE COUNCIL

Collaborative business relationships have been shown to enhance competitiveness and performance amongst companies. Adam Henderson says, "We implemented the standard as

a platform for developing the policies, procedures and attitude required to drive continual improvement. BS 11000 certification has already provided Durham with a wide range of benefits, such as improved levels of performance, cost efficiencies and opportunities for increased innovation and knowledge sharing through collaborative working."

One of Durham's key drivers for the adoption of the standard was to further enhance their mixed economy approach ensuring that the service continues to benefit from the most effective delivery mechanism from both in-house and external framework provisions. A benefit from working within the BS 11000 standard is a more formalised approach in the management of collaborative relationships. Prioritising continual improvement whilst demonstrating value for money through the collaboration, rather than focusing only on meeting the project goals, has helped to produce effective project teams and successful project delivery.

ABOUT BS 11000

BS 11000 is the world's first standard for collaborative business relationships and was created in order to establish a national benchmark and common approach for the way in which organisations use a joint approach to build successful business partnerships.

The standard assesses how organisations use this type of approach to build and develop effective partnerships. By providing a strategic framework as a guide for developing and nurturing valuable relationships, BS 11000 enables organisations to obtain the maximum benefit from any business partnerships.

BS 11000 has helped to provide Durham County Council with the structure to develop, with key stakeholders, the policies and processes, culture and behaviours required to establish successful collaborative relationships and to drive continual improvement. This standard provides the strategic framework to use across services and to further develop relationships and aim for best practice.

BS 11000 uses an eight-phase model to assess an organisation in terms of collaborative business relationships. The model is designed to help organisations of any size and from any sector, gain the most from their business relationships.

Andrew Bury, Performance Assessment – Development and Delivery Manager at SGS believes now is the time to act and make moves in terms of reaching compliance. "Interest in BS 11000 is growing and it will move from a British Standard to an International Standard."

COMPLYING WITH BS 11000

The first step in achieving BS 11000 for Durham County Council was to complete a commonality analysis. The service has already successfully achieved and maintained ISO 9001 Quality Management, ISO 14001 Environmental Management and OHSAS 18001 Health and Safety Management System certifications. This has resulted in common areas throughout the standards, such as Sections 1-3, and certainly provided a firm starting point. Sections of the standard not common to the existing Integrated Management Systems were then subject to a gap analysis which exposed any inconsistencies between current working practices and future requirements of BS 11000.

SGS was then able to design and develop a plan in conjunction with Durham County Council to measure and monitor partnerships, as well as using their expertise to improve the council's understanding of processes in partnership dealings and how to increase transparency and efficiency in order to make compliance easier.

"The main obstacles that we had to overcome included tight timescales and the unfamiliar terminology of this relatively new standard", says Adam Henderson. "We also had a major challenge to demonstrate to our internal and external collaborative partners within our frameworks that the application of the standard would in fact help deliver tangible business benefits to all involved. A series of workshops and briefing sessions provided opportunity to improve stakeholder understanding of collaborative relationships and facilitated a forum for sharing best practice and innovative thinking", concludes Adam.

NEXT STEPS

SGS provides annual surveillance visits to reinforce the collaborative working approach and drive continual improvement.

Adam Henderson believes he has already seen tangible benefits of BS 11000 collaborative business relationships. "In conjunction with established procurement policies, BS 11000 provides a structured and consistent approach to establish and maintain collaborative relationships. We will continue to cascade the benefits of the standard to other areas of the business, applied correctly and consistently BS 11000 will produce a significant benefit on the services ability to work more effectively and efficiently."

For companies considering BS 11000 certification, Adam Henderson advises, "Review the specification and related guidelines for the BS 11000 Collaborative Business Relationship Framework, make early contact with an industry recognised certifying body and early in the process determine what activity or projects are to be included in the scope."

ABOUT SGS

SGS is the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company with more than 85,000 employees operating in a network of 1,800 offices and laboratories around the world.

For further information about the Collaborative Business Relationship standard, go to

www.sgs.co.uk/bs11000

FURTHER INFORMATION

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