



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

Better
Regulation
Delivery Office

Primary Authority and Growth







“Primary Authority is having a real impact on supporting growth.”

“It simplifies how businesses can comply with necessary regulations and helps local authorities engage better with the businesses in their areas and across the country.”

“We in government strongly support Primary Authority and look forward to its continued success.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Hancock', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

**Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP
Minister of State for Business and Enterprise
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills**



Primary Authority: Business Benefits

Through Primary Authority, local authorities and fire and rescue authorities are providing businesses with robust and reliable regulatory advice. This supports growth by enabling them to invest with confidence in products, practices and procedures, knowing that there is endorsement of the resources they devote to compliance. Across the UK, it is saving millions of pounds.

Primary Authority is inclusive – the participating businesses cover a wide variety of sectors and over half of them have less than 50 employees.

Small businesses can face particular regulatory challenges that they do not have the money or expert personnel to tackle on their own. Primary Authority is providing a means to address this situation for individual businesses and through participating trade associations.

For example, as a result of assured advice, Brightstar Fireworks secured £2.5 million of sales and event merchandise company Touch of Ginger won a £100,000 contract. Sums of this order, repeated in small and medium businesses across the country, add up to a significant contribution to growth.

Further examples of businesses that have gained from Primary Authority – through direct partnerships and as members of trade associations in co-ordinated partnerships – are highlighted on the following pages.

Primary Authority: Practice

“...accelerated period of growth...”

The direct Primary Authority Partnership between **Imperial Cars** and **Portsmouth City Council** has enabled the business to benefit from clearer advice on compliance and more consistent enforcement. It has enjoyed an accelerated period of growth over the past two years – with turnover increasing from £27 million to £60 million – and attributes much of this to the disciplines introduced as a result of the agreement. The business has found the support it receives on its obligations invaluable. For example, it has been able to reduce complaints by approximately 30 per cent, due to changes to its internal culture and overall approach.

JD Weatherspoon worked with Reading Borough Council to improve its Food Hygiene System rating across 900 premises from 4.3 in October 2011 to 4.8 in February 2013, one of the top ratings for a high street operator.

“...pioneering food safety policy...”

HC-One serves up to 55,000 meals per day to 11,000 elderly residents in 246 care homes. It was spending a lot of time and money on reactive management of food safety breaches and inconsistent requirements and recommendations from different inspections. It now works in a direct Primary Authority Partnership with **Wigan Council** to design, deliver and audit its food safety programme, and to develop supporting initiatives. These include compulsory induction training, a pioneering food safety policy, and a robust inspection programme. The projected savings for 2014 are in excess of £1 million.

Primary Authority: Practice

“...innovative strands of work...”

Advice that improves safety while reducing fire fighting equipment costs has been developed by the direct Primary Authority Partnership between **Home Retail Group** (comprising three operating companies: Argos, Habitat and Homebase) and **Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service**. Its work also has other innovative strands. These include an assessment of the link between insurance risk and participation in Primary Authority, and an exploration of the potential for national investigation data from household fires to be fed back to primary authorities covering product safety.

Superdrug is working with Slough Borough Council to improve health and safety procedures, agreeing a three-year health and safety plan with clearly defined objectives.

“...risk-based strategy...”

A key priority for **ASDA** is to ensure that it sells alcohol and other age restricted products responsibly. It adopts a positive and thorough approach to building customer trust in its stores and wider communities. In 2013, ASDA introduced a risk-based strategy to test purchasing, working in its direct Primary Authority Partnership with **West Yorkshire Joint Services**. As a result, its alcohol sales compliance rate has reached an industry leading 91.3 per cent. ASDA is now formalising its strategy to obtain assured advice and earned recognition.

Primary Authority: Practice

“...adopted at European level...”

New rules on CE marking of construction products were introduced in the EU in advance of guidance on how they should be implemented. Businesses felt that in the absence of specific advice they were in no position to make the investment decisions required. The **Construction Products Association** used its co-ordinated Primary Authority Partnership with **Cambridgeshire County Council** to provide its members with a consistent interpretation of the key issues. This has since been adopted at European level, saving the sector hundreds of millions of pounds.

The British Association of Removers was the first trade association to provide a full compliance programme, comprising Primary Authority, an approved code of practice, and an independent dispute resolution scheme.

“...expert advice and support...”

New guidance following a serious E.coli 0157 food poisoning outbreak led to small and medium-sized butchers facing costly requirements for new equipment and shop remodelling. The **National Federation of Meat and Food Traders** has formed a co-ordinated Primary Authority Partnership with **Horsham District Council**. It is working with specialists, including the Food Standards Agency and Public Health England, to provide expert advice and support to its members and regulators, and to promote growth and compliance.

Primary Authority: Practice

“...regulatory certainty...”

Inconsistent advice was the reason that the **National Federation of Property Professionals** formed its co-ordinated Primary Authority Partnership with **Warwickshire County Council**. To date it has issued six pieces of assured advice to its members, covering the description of attic rooms, energy performance certificates and the cancellation of contracts requirements. Its members say they now have regulatory certainty on what exactly they need to do in order to comply with complex legislation.

The British Parking Association is considering how Primary Authority could be used to support service standards and address consumer concerns around parking charges and fines.

“...clear and simple...”

The workers at charity shops are often volunteers and need clear and simple ‘rules’ they can rely on when complying with relevant regulations. The **Charity Retail Association** represents most of the charity shops in the UK and is in the process of forming a co-ordinated Primary Authority Partnership with **Salford Council**, so that product safety advice to its members can be updated and assured. The charity retail sector is a substantial part of the high street, for example the British Heart Foundation has over 400 shops in the UK.



Primary Authority: Numbers

2147



**Businesses in
partnerships**

**Trade associations in
partnerships**



18

129



**Local authorities in
partnerships**

**Fire and rescue
partnerships**



134

Figures on 1 January 2015



Primary Authority: Feedback

“Primary Authority can deliver real benefits to businesses, local authorities and consumers. Assured advice drives up standards and supports businesses to trade with confidence.”

Catherine Brown, Chief Executive, Food Standards Agency

“Primary Authority provides the opportunity to build consistent interpretation and application of the rules around nutrition and health claims and this has great benefits for both industry and local government in terms of time saving.”

Helen Darracot, Director of Legal and Regulatory Affairs, PAGB

“Primary Authority is new to the fire service. It supports a cultural change where we’re seeing fire officers moving from enforcement to business support, and fits our overall aim to see the fire service being the best regulator in the UK.”

Dave Curry, Director of Prevention, Protection and Road Safety, CFA

“The extension of Primary Authority will help us put some consistency in place for our members, who are very skilled practically but not necessarily comfortable dealing with paperwork.”

Roger Kelsey, National Federation of Meat and Food Traders

“Anything that can cut red tape, simplify compliance with the law and save money while simultaneously protecting consumers is to be commended and that’s exactly what Primary Authority does.”

Pol Exeter, Regulatory Services Consultant



Primary Authority: Background

Primary Authority began in April 2009 and has doubled in size every year since its first anniversary. It enables businesses to form a statutory partnership with one local authority or fire and rescue authority, which then provides robust and reliable advice for other local regulators to follow when carrying out inspections or addressing non-compliance.

Agreements can cover broad or specific areas of environmental health, fire safety, licensing and trading standards legislation.

The aim is to ensure that local regulation is consistent at a national level and sufficiently flexible to address local circumstances.

The Better Regulation Delivery Office exercises the statutory responsibility for the operation of Primary Authority on behalf of the Secretary of State, nominating partnerships, issuing guidance, and resolving determinations.

We manage the online, interactive Primary Authority Register. It gives easy access to details on every registered partnership and allows primary authorities to make key information on business risks and systems readily available to local regulators preparing to visit premises.

We run free training courses for local regulators – attended by 1000 people in 2013-2014 – and workshops for partnerships.

Working with local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, government departments, trade associations and Local Enterprise Partnerships, we have helped businesses make significant cost and time savings through Primary Authority, boosting local economies.

**Better Regulation Delivery Office
Lower Ground Floor
Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B2 4AJ**

pa@brdo.bis.gsi.gov.uk

brdo.enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk

Primary Authority Register

<https://primaryauthorityregister.info>

Better Regulation Delivery Office

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/better-regulation-delivery-office>

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