

# THE JOURNEY FROM COLLABORATION TO INTEGRATION



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Orbis started as a procurement sharing arrangement between East Sussex and Surrey County Councils in 2012.

The partnership was formalised under an Inter-Authority Agreement in April 2015, with Brighton and Hove City Council becoming the third founding partner in May 2017.

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### The Collaborate to Integrate Model

The partnerships' aim is to deliver operational savings in the region of 20% against its 2015/16 baseline, and be fully integrated by April 2019.

Although it's still early-on in the programme, Orbis has already exceeded expectations by generating £4.5m of efficiency savings in 16/17, surpassing financial targets by £3.4m. These initial savings have largely been achieved through a 25% reduction in senior management posts through delayering and reduction in duplication.



Our *Collaborate to Integrate* model (see table below) has been central to the successful delivery of the programme. It is based on the 5Cs model which separates the journey towards convergence into 5 key stages: contact, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and finally convergence.

Each of Orbis' seven service areas has different complex challenges to work through in order to achieve service integration across the three councils. The Orbis leadership team recognised from the start that it would be impossible to deliver a 'one size fits all'

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	Contact	Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration	Convergence
Level of Integration	Experimental	Minimal	Selective	Selective	Full
Orbis Staff commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Casual networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trust building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared goals with separate administrative framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared vision with changes to working practices and new cross-partner interdependencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared mission and service delivery</li> <li>Common standards and policies</li> <li>Performance management</li> <li>Integrated structures</li> </ul>
Typical activities and focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploration of differences and commonalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information sharing</li> <li>Identify opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning Joint Projects</li> <li>Process simplification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing joint projects leading to shared services</li> <li>Process standardisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information sharing</li> <li>Identify opportunities</li> </ul>

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approach to integration. Instead they decided to empower each function to find their own way of achieving integrated budgets by April 2018 and service integration by April 2019. This has allowed each area to move at its own pace.

In practice, this means that each service is at a different stage of the programme. Some areas of Orbis' **Finance and Procurement** functions are now fully integrated within the service, whilst others are still standardising processes and instigating joint ways of working.

**Property and Revenues & Benefits** functions are still in the 'Contact' stage and are only just starting to establish commonalities and differences between their services.

**IT & Digital** are establishing the foundations of collaborative working for everyone in Orbis through rolling out Outlook 365 and Skype for Business, and setting up wi-fi access across all sites.

**Business Operations** are starting to build relationships, share information and identify opportunities for shared working.

**HR & OD** have built relationships and are now moving towards creating shared goals and working on joint projects.

#### **Meeting shared service peers**

Over the last two years, Orbis has focused on building a solid foundation for the partnership. We have learnt a lot about creating a local government shared service partnership as a result and recently participated in a Shared Services Summit with our peers from Onesource and LGSS hosted by the LGA.

This industry thinktank provided invaluable insight into lessons learnt and ideas for overcoming common challenges. A follow up session is planned for later in the year.

Although we did meet with these organisations before Orbis was officially formed, in hindsight we could have done more to engage with and learn from these organisations before embarking on our shared services journey.

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Working in partnership provides many complex challenges that needs to be overcome.

This is especially difficult in Local Government due to the differing politics and cultures within the sovereign organisations. Overcoming this or the ability to operate effectively despite these challenges will ensure the success of the partnership in the long term.

#### **PPMA Awards**

Our approach to collaborative working has already received industry recognition with Orbis winning an Organisational Excellence Awards for culture, being highly commended at the Public Services People Managers Association Awards, and being awarded a runner up prize for collaboration at the Institute of Continuous Improvements in the Public Sector Awards.