



Briefing Note for Regulatory Services Staff



This briefing note gives the background to *Better Business for All* and explains what is happening, who is involved, and how you can help.

What is the national context?

The number one priority for this Government is economic recovery. To assist this growth all elements of the regulatory system need to enable businesses to create wealth and jobs as well as protect communities and citizens. The Government is committed to cutting red tape and ensuring this translates into a reduction in the burden on businesses at a local level. This means effective local regulation is required and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) can help deliver this.

What are LEPs?

LEPs are partnerships between business and local regulators to drive local growth and create local jobs. There are currently 39 LEPs, and the representation on their governance bodies often extends to universities and the voluntary and community sector. Although the scope of their activities varies from area to area, they all provide a means to generate local solutions to local needs. LEPs can choose to adopt the Better Business for All (BBfA) programme as part of their work.

What is BBfA?

BBfA involves the development of new relationships between businesses and local regulators to support growth by identifying the issues facing local businesses and shaping the provision of effective support services to them. While it is aimed at all businesses there is a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as these generally need most support to comply with the law.

BBfA comprises a brand and a toolkit of resources for LEPs. The brand was created by Leicester and Leicestershire LEP and then adopted by Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP, both LEP regulatory pathfinders. The toolkit is being developed by the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO), drawing on material provided by LEPs and nationally respected good practice. In essence, the elements of the toolkit grow from local LEP activity and benefit from a national perspective, but can then be adapted for delivery in accordance with local LEP needs. They also carry the BBfA brand, to give businesses and regulators greater confidence in their quality.

This is about helping those who want to be helped, while maintaining a strong enforcement profile where there is deliberate non-compliance or uncontrolled risks.



What are the objectives of BBfA?

The aims of the programme are to:

- reduce the regulatory burden on businesses;
- promote two way communication between businesses and regulatory services;
- improve the business perception of regulators;
- support regulators to find the right balance between encouragement, education and enforcement;
- develop a joint offer of support from regulatory services for businesses;
- build trust of both regulators and businesses; and
- advise government how to do things better for both businesses and regulators.

How can I help?

Businesses have told many LEPs that they would like advice and guidance from regulatory services officers, as it is these people who will ultimately check whether they are complying.

You may often be the only 'official' a small business encounters, which puts you in a key role. You can signpost the business to relevant sources of support, help your organisation obtain information about the local business community, and act as the 'eyes and ears' for other regulatory agencies.

Your relationship with a business may even determine whether it decides to grow. If you encourage expansion by providing solution-focused advice and removing regulatory barriers – whether real or perceived – then this supports your local economy.

The LEPs are aware that you may well be operating with reduced resources and tighter budgets due to the recession. This is forcing regulatory services to become more innovative and more risk-based in their approach to enforcement. In the face of this changing environment, you can act to ensure that what is good in the present system is not lost, while thinking more creatively about supporting businesses.

This is about a different approach rather than doing more. Helping businesses become compliant reduces the level of interaction they require with regulatory services, thus releasing resources to target non-compliant and rogue businesses. In addition, closer working between regulatory services enables the more effective use of limited resources. For example, do local businesses really need a separate newsletter or email alert from each regulator?

What are the benefits of BBfA for regulatory services?

The chance of regulatory officers receiving a hostile reception when they visit premises is reduced through the new relationship with businesses. When they are perceived as enablers, their advice and support are welcomed.

More resources can be targeted at non-compliant and rogue businesses as increasing numbers of businesses become compliant and no longer need frequent regulatory interventions.

Operational tasks can be undertaken more efficiently due to closer working between regulatory services. Any duplication within the system can also be identified and eliminated.

The profile of regulatory services is enhanced by recognition of their role in assisting growth.

What underpins BBfA?

To maximise the impact of BBfA in removing real and perceived barriers to growth, the LEPs view three cultural changes as necessary:

1. Businesses need to overcome their fear of accessing help from regulators.
2. Regulators need to be regarded, and regard themselves, as enablers as well as enforcers.
3. Regulatory services need to recognise their role in supporting growth.

How can I find out more?

Your line manager is your first port of call (and you may well have received this briefing note during a presentation from him or her on BBfA). Your local authority will also have a representative in your local LEP who will be able to answer any questions.

Any thoughts, suggestion or ideas you have on how the current system could be enhanced are very welcome. Your views count because to achieve the desired outcomes of BBfA, all frontline regulatory services officers need to be on board. It is true that for some the required shift in approach will be greater than for others, but this is an opportunity for all to make a difference to local businesses and citizens.

To achieve the desired outcomes all frontline regulatory services officers need to be on board. For some the required shift in approach will be greater than for others but this is an opportunity to make a difference to your local area. Thriving businesses create vibrant high streets and support local communities through employment and investment.

The BBfA brand guidelines and toolkit are at: www.bis.gov.uk/brdo/business/leps/bbfa-resources