# Local Information Systems Development Tool

## Guidance Annex

*This document presents the additional guidance notes contained within the 'Local Systems Development Tool' in a printable format. It does not present the full content of the tool, and should be read in conjunction with the tool, rather than in isolation.*

# Strategic Need

## 1. Strategic need

**Why do you need a LIS?**

The need for a LIS can often be the result of a number of drivers. Many LIS have been formed as a result of a funding opportunity, a specific policy or thematic imperative (such as crime) and/or a need to present standard statistical information / profiles to a range of audiences. Some LIS in Scotland have been developed by researchers as a way of responding more efficiently to requests for data from officers, elected members and the public.

**What are some of the issues you need to consider?**

A large amount of local data is currently provided on Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics. It is important that you fully consider what added value developing your own local information system will offer. This could be: providing an interpretation of the data based on local knowledge, presenting aggregated data at geographies which are locally defined, or collating data which is not available nationally (i.e. research and data collected locally).

In our consultation in England, local partners pointed to the rise in importance of partnership structures and a LIS was seen as an opportunity to support collaboration across partnerships. Where partnerships do not have a transparent/accessible means of handling of data and information, the development of a LIS was often seen to be an effective solution to manage these issues. It is important that you are clear about what the internal case is for developing/not developing a LIS. You may wish to explore this in more detail by conducting scoping with key individuals to explore their needs/imperatives:

- Chief Executives department
- Research and Intelligence teams
- Performance Management roles
- Departmental Heads
- Communications/consultation teams

A benefit of having a LIS is that it is seen as a cost-effective means of communicating information and intelligence to both external and internal audiences.

Some local authorities were receiving a high number of requests for information in a form that the council was not able to provide. The LIS enabled the public to access information in a way that they could then manipulate themselves. This helped reduce enquiry costs, as individual requests were highly time consuming and resource intensive.

### External factors

Most of the local authorities that participated in our consultations in England and Scotland had made contact with other authorities with a LIS to find out more information about how they are run and managed (including across the border). This proved helpful for gaining a better understanding of the resource requirements (human and financial) that support a LIS. It also allowed individuals to see the different capabilities of LIS and work out which form or style of LIS would be best suited to their authority. All who went to see other LIS found it extremely helpful.  It would be useful for you to have an idea of the type of LIS you most aspire to and to then get in contact.

| Resources |
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| • An overview paper of the development of LIS in Scotland<br>• Links to Local Information Systems across the UK.<br>• Download the North East Lincolnshire LIS Business Case. |

## 2. How does the LIS fit with other strategies and plans

LIS can be used to help with forward planning and funding development.  Existing performance management systems enable retrospective analysis although this is often limited in terms of providing data at neighbourhood level.  Many authorities found it useful, in making the case for a LIS, to talk to a wide pool of colleagues about the potential implications and benefits of a LIS. The result was that more officers, members and partners supported the LIS development and this helped ensure its sustainability.

## 3. Engagement and buy-in

### Senior level buy-in

Gaining senior level buy-in at the earliest possible stage greatly helps the development of the LIS. The lack of buy-in at a crucial time of reorganisation can mean the LIS can be overlooked as a priority. The ideal demonstration of buy-in is either financial commitment or a partnership agreement between senior figures across the authority and potential partners. Gaining buy-in can be time consuming but could save time and money in the long run.  In England, many of the authorities engaged with the Local Strategic Partnership as a matter of course and the LSP was seen to be a key partner. In Scotland, ensuring the buy-in of the Community Planning Partnership is likely to be key. It is also important that you consult with other departments and teams within the authority.

Securing buy-in in some cases can be like pushing at an open door - however, conducting a short brain-storming session to attempt to understand the needs of partners or other departments can make gaining buy-in easier.  There are a number of tools that you can use to undertake such a task, for example Stakeholder/Audience mapping exercises, which help you map out who you should be talking to and what you should be saying.  By putting yourself in the shoes of other departments and partners this can be a useful way of understanding different needs and approaches to help you gain buy-in more quickly than otherwise.

## 4. Identifying and prioritising audiences

### Audience

Identifying the core audience for the LIS can be of great benefit. It enables the LIS developers to have a clear idea of data and functionality needed. Knowing the core audience also means that future consultation on developments and needs can be targeted. However in some instances this can lead authorities into an artificially narrow view. Basing the LIS on the needs of the core audience can be detrimental if the core users have not been correctly identified and if the core users are not fully aware of all their needs.

Many LISs consulted said that that focusing on doing a few things well at the start was important for the long term success of the LIS. If you are able to cater for all needs initially that is good.  However, do not feel as though the LIS must cater for everyone immediately. Building the LIS piece by piece will help in the long run.

### ‘Persona’ methodologies

One LIS developed a 'Joe Public' character to think about what people would be interested in outside of the authority and partners. To an extent it is easier to think about what officers and partners will want to see as this should be determined by their role. It was harder to think what third sector organisations, business and members of the public may want to see. You may need to conduct consultation with these groups if they are considered key audiences for your LIS.

# Scoping and Planning

## Resources

### 1. Initial funding

One LIS consulted believes that having a funding agreement is necessary for a sustainable LIS because without it they have to put in a new submission every year. This can affect longer term sustainability. Other local partners are also working towards setting up funding agreements to make their services more sustainable.

### 2. Organisational and human

One local authority in England decided to integrate their LIS within the existing information team in the Chief Executive's department, but this created some issues internally around boundaries and access to internal data. Another local authority has their LIS located in two departments which has created confusion. One local authority paid for an external company to host their on-line service because it was cheaper than using their internal IT. It also meant that data could be uploaded remotely and was not reliant on staff availability within the authority. Some LIS in Scotland rely on single members of staff and this poses difficulties in terms of capacity and sustainability.

In most cases LIS have been set up from existing information and intelligence teams based within local authorities, and this appears to be the most natural and effective way of getting a LIS off the ground. However this has both benefits and disadvantages and will depend on the purpose of the LIS and how it is funded. These issues are explored further under the STRATEGIC NEED section. You will need to agree with funders the best home for your LIS.

You will also need to consider whether to set the LIS up as an independent cost centre. This could be important, particularly if you are looking to charge for services in the future to support sustainability and/or you need to report on spending to funders.

## People

### 1. Key roles and responsibilities

**Senior management accountability**

Senior management accountability at Chief Executive or Director level was identified in our consultation as being critical to ensuring the delivery of a LIS.

**Day to day management**

In most cases staff were identified to manage the LIS from existing staff members. If you are using internal resources you will need to ensure that sufficient time has been allocated for the individual to carry out the role and that their roles and responsibilities are clear and agreed within the job description and performance targets.

## 2. Staff numbers and posts

**Resources**

- Click to view an example job description and person specification for a LIS Manager
- Click to view an example job description and person specification for a LIS System Administrator

## 4. Users

### Identifying prospective users

New users are often identified as LIS develop, either from contributing partners or from the public as well as internal staff. It is important that you conduct a mapping exercise of potential users of the LIS and understand their content and functionality requirements, both at the start and throughout the operation of the LIS. It is important when developing your LIS that it is fit for the purposes of its primary audiences.

Typical users of LIS tend to be made up of the following:

- Existing research and intelligence teams in local partner organisations such as the local authority, NHS and the police
- Policy and performance officers
- Elected members and leaders
- Third sector/community organisations
- Businesses
- General public

### Consulting users

Consulting with all partners about what they would want to see from a system can help in getting more buy-in. Those that consulted with all their partners felt that it worked very well. One local authority has identified three levels of users:

- Super users – those that are likely to contribute and manipulate data – these are usually with leads from partner organisations and may require different levels of access to data;
- Medium users – those that are likely to want to interrogate the information to support activities such as funding bids and may need to access some functionality around mapping;
- Low level users – those users that have limited functionality requirements and need to access data on a periodic basis. For these users you may find that having pre-prepared information sheets/bulletins for them to access is more efficient and many authorities already produce 'static' intelligence for individuals to access directly from their website. This can help reduce the number of direct enquiries to a research and intelligence team.

### Training for users

Most local authorities have identified the need to put in place a simple training programme, either on-line or through workshops, for the users of the LIS. The training tends to focus on navigation and the use of any interactive tools. One local authority consulted felt that most people are able to find their way around the system naturally. Where users have a particular interest they prefer to do a five minute one-to-one training session over the phone.

You may want to consider conducting an assessment of the training needs of LIS users and perhaps build a diagnostic to help users understand their needs. You could build an on-line guide to help users through the system.  If you are using consultation events to promote the LIS to users then you could also build in ‘How to Use’ training sessions as part of these events.

**Marketing and communications**

It is important that you consider how best you can communicate and market your LIS.  This will be entirely dependent on who your target audiences are.  One LIS we spoke to had a really big publicity campaign which included taking the LIS to various senior management groups to demonstrate its functionality.  This helped to position the LIS at a senior level and gave it profile within senior management.  It is important that you consider a launch of the LIS or re-launch if you are making any major changes to its content or functionality.  If your LIS is to be used within a defined and small community of users then you may not need an intensive programme of activity.  If however your audience is across a broad range of audiences then you will need to consider the most appropriate routes of engaging and marketing the LIS to them.  It is easier to make a case for continuation of funding and ensure sustainability if your LIS has a high level of usage and is seen to be an essential service for information and knowledge exchange.   Some options for you to consider are:

- Launch event for a broad audience
- Stakeholder events/introduction meetings for partners and key users
- Advertising and links through partner web-sites
- Use of existing marketing media
- Promotion of LIS through letters, newsletters  and bulletins (ideally e-based) to users
- Use of networks to promote LIS

# Data

## 1. Managing the data

**Aggregating data**

Data available from SNS at a data-zone level has already been checked for potential confidentiality issues. It will be important to consider whether there is any potential confidentiality issues with any locally collected data which may be presented at data-zone level.

In England, one LIS we spoke to, aggregated confidential data to ward level, as agreed by partners, so that it would be suitable for public display. Another is looking to aggregate all their data to get a picture of the whole local authority area to inform monitoring of the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

**Format and quality**

Formatting data into a consistent template for uploading into a system was an issue faced by most LIS consulted.  One said having everything linked to the local end would make things easier but in the meantime they had to specify to partners the format and structure of the data.  It is important to ensure that there is consistency in formats otherwise a great deal of time can be spent cleansing and re-formatting data into a useable form.  This will have cost and resource implications for your LIS.

One LIS said they did not really have the time or resources to sit and check all data - they had to learn to trust their partners to upload high quality data.  Making the submitting organisations responsible for the quality of their own data can save time and help ensure data are robust.  Another LIS said they needed to improve the quality of their data, especially when geo-coding.  Unintentional or deliberate disclosure of data had not been a problem for the LIS consulted.

| Resources |
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| The links below provide a range of information on best practice for managing and sharing data:<br><br>These sources outline some current guidance for local authorities on sharing and managing data:<br><br>• Information Commissioner's Office<br>• Data Sharing: Legal Guidance for the Public Sector (Scottish Executive, 2004)<br>• Department for Constitutional Affairs – Data Sharing Toolkit<br><br>The Scottish Government has recently carried out a review of data handling:<br><br>• Data Handling in Government<br><br>Recent CLG research in England has also identified a number of good practice principles and examples of successful local data sharing, see:<br><br>• "Research on the Costs and Benefits of Personal Data Sharing at Local Partnership Level"<br><br>Guidance has also been specifically produced for children's services and health data<br><br>• Scottish Government's eCare Framework (for services working with children and vulnerable adults)<br>• NHS Scotland Information Governance site |

### Storage and access

Some LIS chose to have data stored centrally to avoid duplication and confusion. Allowing everyone to work on the same dataset reduced error and created consistency. It also meant there would be consistency for those accessing the data, either for information or to interrogate and manipulate it.

Most LIS we spoke to have different levels of security clearance depending on the sensitivity of the data; usually public access and internal. Most have restricted access for viewing and editing purposes. One has made everything available to the public because they do not have any information on their website that is not already public. Access to your LIS will have implications for the technical requirements for your chosen system.

### Tracking and storing information on users

Some LIS in England have registration systems in order to tailor the website homepage for registered users according to their preferences and most visited pages. However, the registration process could also deter users. You should explore this during your user consultation process. The information gleaned from tracking data use can help with content development and monitoring satisfaction with the system.

Most LIS we investigated have user IDs and permissions because of the different access levels available.

| Resources |
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| The links below are for LIS that have registered access options:<br>• http://www.nomadplus.org.uk/<br>• http://www.mkiobservatory.org.uk/ |

### Partner submissions

Some LIS encourage partners to put information on the system independently. This has implications for the kind of system you select and how you ensure the quality of data being uploaded.

One local authority developed standards and structure as part of their data sharing protocol; they know what information to store, at what level and how the information is to be presented, for example, aggregated to ward level so that it is suitable for public display.

Providing security and managing risks is important to allow partners to give you their data.

## 2. Providing data

### Identifying data

The Improvement Service and the Local Outcome Indicators Project are identifying key indicators to be used in supporting Single Outcome Agreements. This guidance may be a useful starting point in identifying data. SNS also has a considerable number of additional data sets available, many of which are available at data-zone level. A wider range of data is more easily accessible at local authority level. Access to nationally collated datasets through SNS is likely to be more straightforward than locally collected data.

The kind of LIS you are seeking to establish and the level of detail users will be able to drilldown to will influence the datasets you use.

| Resources |
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| The links below are for websites used to gain data:<br>• http://www.sns.gov.uk/<br>• http://www.scotpho.org.uk/home/home.asp<br>• http://www.isdscotland.org<br>• https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp |

### Partners for data sharing

Data sharing was perceived as a problem for some local authorities, but less to for those who had existing informal data sharing arrangements. A common issue was reluctance to share data by a department or partner organisation. There are however sufficient examples of good practice at a local level to suggest that effective data sharing can be achieved. These examples rely on: a structured approach to identifying and sharing data, data security and legal compliance.

One local authority is involved with its neighbouring authorities and other partners in an information sharing forum. This helps to ensure consistent protocols for engaging with partners (e.g. the NHS) who operate with different geographical boundaries.

### Filling gaps

Most local partners want to get information at the lowest possible level. Some are trying to produce their own local data. Gaps are being identified as they go along and partners are encouraged to put missing information on the system and share data. You may wish to consider how the gaps identified for your LIS support and inform the planning and commissioning of new research activity across the partnership.

**Willingness to share data**

Some local authorities have an informal data sharing protocol in place whereas others feel there needs to be more involvement from the Chief Executives Department to push this forward. One authority has used different levels to determine the extent to which partners are willing to share data. You may find it useful to categorise partners/data providers into these levels:

• Level One - we commit to share
• Level Two - we commit to share on this date
• Level Three - we commit to share on this date in this way

**Updating**

One local authority that does not have a formal data sharing protocol has come across quite a few problems such as having to set timescales for people to work to on an ad hoc basis, and having little to hold partners accountable to. This has impacted on their ability to keep the system up to date; once timescales slip and the information becomes out of date then people lose faith in the system. Most LIS update data at intervals that they feel are appropriate (i.e. monthly, quarterly, annually). A decision has to be made over the trade off between time resource and accuracy. As updating the LIS is a rolling process, dedicated staff and resources are required to maintain it along with backing from senior managers. Some LIS pay a support fee to their data providers who have developed a template to upload data.

| **Resources** |
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| The link below is an example of a data sharing protocol. This was not designed for a LIS but it contains many of the same issues and provides an example structure:<br>• Ealing Example |

**Protocol – caveats and disclaimers**

One LIS we spoke to sends newsletters to everybody who has registered an interest on the site. With the newsletter they update information on new resources and features to encourage use. If you are using a registration system for users you could think about automatic updates and notifications by email as soon as updates have occurred.

**Ability to transport data from system**

When choosing a software provider it is useful to check if data uploaded to their system can be transported to another system should you choose to switch provider. This is one argument for using open source technology where no licenses are required.

**User data needs**

One LIS we spoke to had conducted an audit of information held by partners and used that to generate a strategy for collecting the required data and to help establish what people wanted. Another did some research to find out exactly what data people were interested in, what would be useful and what not. They also conducted an e-consultation which is to be built into the site.

## 3. Publishing data online

### Formats for publishing

Data can be presented in a variety of formats such as tabulated or graphed  Some LIS simply present data, while others present a researcher's interpretation of the statistics, in local area profiles for example. Using interactive mapping software allows users to overlay different types of data. One LIS consulted presents analysis reports of performance as static data that can be downloaded on request. One LIS found that a Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping facility was too technical for the public so introduced something simpler.

Some went for a system that looked very sophisticated and had all the mapping capabilities. This system had issues in the way that data could be uploaded and its analytical capabilities but the main purpose of the system was to display relatively simple, thematically arranged data on a map, which it could do well.

Most partners want to display community profiles that are regularly updated in static form for easy download  – this has implications for how partners resource their LIS teams. Some want to display information, tell people what it is, where it came from, and what it means. Another wants users to be able to pull up data and look at it in different ways.  You will need to ensure that as part of your user consultations you explore how users want to relate to, manipulate and access published data.

### Branding and web compliance

Adhering to various web guidelines such as the Disability Discrimination Act, W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) and generally making sure that the website is user friendly is important (for example, text sizes and colours to help the visually impaired).  You should also consider corporate branding and other corporate issues.

# Functionality

## 1. Developing an appropriate back end system

### 'Back end' personnel

At one LIS in England the Research team within Corporate Policy maintain the 'back end' along with the IT team who also have access. At another LIS the IT department and some members of the Quality and Performance team within the Chief Executive's office take responsibility for developing and operating the system.

Back end users tend to be split between research and information officers and the IT team.  The research and information officers take responsibility for what information is included and at what geographical level, its design (completed in conjunction with graphic designers) and for uploading it; whilst the IT team are responsible for the software. In one LIS consulted, rights for back end users are split between the IT team who are responsible for uploading data for interactive displays and the research team who maintain the system and can only upload static data.  This division has created problems with the length of time the research team have to wait until new data is uploaded as the IT team are also working with other priorities.

It is important to note that few LIS in Scotland are resourced as extensively as those in England.

### Integration

Advice from one LIS suggests performance management functionally can be linked with LIS. This requires the joint-working between the two departments, and recognising the potential value of integrating the two systems. Another LIS has suggested that if you develop your LIS in line with your performance management system as a cohesive package, ideally working off the same database, then you will be a step ahead; especially as data monitoring and analysis is becoming more important.

**Interface points**

Most LIS consulted had issues with trying to get the data into a specific format before uploading it onto the system.

The LIS needs to be as flexible as possible. In the future it is thought that Performance Management and Corporate Management Systems will have to talk to Local Information Systems so the LIS should be designed with that in mind. Equally the geographical levels at which data is analysed are increasingly at below local authority level, for example at multi-member ward level.

**Uploading data from partners**

With training, members of partner organisations involved with one particular LIS, were able to upload and contribute their own resources. This meant that partner users and council staff could upload when they wanted to, placing the onus on partners to keep their information updated.

**Monitoring**

Can administration activity be audited? Ensure that the LIS functional requirements covers this - and you know who did what. This can be done with giving each administrator/uploader a unique password. This enables monitoring and auditing of activity.

**Sharing**

Data is increasingly shared between national and local levels as the use of data and information assumes a central role in public sector activity. Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics is the key source of Government statistics.

**Infrastructure**

Some LIS in England have sought a third party to design and develop their LIS, but have decided that they could either employ the necessary staff or have the technical capabilities in house to host it themselves. Some potential difficulties should be kept in mind however including a need to enhance the technical capabilities of IT teams, an inability to recruit and potential time lags with IT teams in solving technical problems. One LIS has expressed a desire to move their LIS to a third party host, as they believe this would allow a broader system to develop; one that is more suited to what they want rather than limited to the skill sets that they currently possess.

Another LIS pays for the website and a third party hosts it although they do have the option to host it in house if and when necessary. Determining which option suits you best will depend on the capacity and ability of your existing IT infrastructure and teams as well as the budget and resources you have identified to develop your LIS.

**Storage**

Some LIS chose to have data stored centrally to avoid duplication and confusion. Allowing everyone to work on the same dataset reduced error and created consistency. It also meant there would be consistency for those accessing the data either for information or to work on.

### Protocols

Whilst a lot of data is being provided by information and research departments, LIS collect data for a number of different areas, working in partnerships for example with the NHS and other local partners.  To ensure that data can be collected and then used, local authorities have established data sharing protocols and suggest doing this as early on as possible.  National statistics are also being used from SNS.

## 2. Users

### User needs

Be aware that needs will change with different users, and with the specific local context in which they are working.  For example the public in one local authority in England are using the information from their LIS to inform decisions around property investment due to current growth and changes in the area. Experiences of another local authority suggests that general area information is not enough for other users, and those pulling funding bids together for example would require more detailed information.

There may be data privacy issues related to functionality. We suggest you cover this within the data scoping section.

### Skill levels

Knowing user skill levels is important, if information is presented  in a way that is too complicated for members of the public then potentially valuable information might not be utilised due to a lack of understanding.  Making systems more accessible and user friendly allows a wider audience to use it effectively.

### Accessibility

One LIS ensures that users have the opportunity to access the data in a number of different ways. Giving users this range of options allows people with different skills and abilities to access information, and also provides people with flexibility in terms of presentation.  This process also helped the host overcome difficulties in their inability to be triple A compliant on each page.

| Resources |
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| • View more information on the legal aspects of web accessibility. |

### Training

Training users in the form of presentations at different partner organisations and formal half-day training sessions has proved useful for some local authorities whilst others have gone further and provided advice over the telephone and on a more informal basis around their desks when required.  Others are considering writing guidance on the system so that people can work out themselves how to use it, although some think that having manuals on the system may lose potential users as they will be put off.

| Resources |
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| • View user guidance developed by the Nottingham LIS. |

## 3. Third party commissioning

### Consulting others

Speak to as many people internally (especially senior directors) and in external organisations especially with those who already have a Local Information System.  If you can visit and see what they are doing that is even better.  Some authorities also suggest speaking to software suppliers and inviting them in for demonstrations of their software which they are generally more than willing to do.

It is important to address stakeholders and consult the needs of all public sector partners during the development stages so that all needs are identified and integrated.

| Resources |
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| • View links to those we consulted in Scotland<br>• View links to existing LIS in England |

### Compliance

Legal issues surrounding data protection have been at the forefront for local authorities, especially if required at data-zone level, and must be addressed from the beginning.  Keeping information sharing protocols up to date will also help this.

### Accessibility

If the council site is WAI AA or AA compliant, is any ‘public facing’ aspect of your LIS that is embedded or available to public users from within your website developed in such a ways that it is accessible to the same level and does it need to be? You need to be careful that by allowing access to elements of the LIS within the website does not invalidate the overall accessibility rating of the host site.

### Keeping it simple

Additional functionality should be idiot proof: the less training required the better. People can get carried away and think that anything is possible. So you need to be clear on what it is that you want. It imperative that you have outlined ALL your requirements in the commissioning document before you select and appoint a provider.

### Mapping your requirements

Some LIS have drawn up a list of requirements including timescales and budgets available, user needs and tools required, which were presented to third parties and consequently helped them decide on options that met their needs.  A grid was used in one LIS to aid this process; requirements were listed along the top row and a list of possible options were listed down the left hand column on which they performed a tick exercise, filling in the boxes and narrowing down possible options.

| Resources |
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| • View an example framework used by a local authority to develop an understanding of its requirements. |

### Relationships with suppliers

Suppliers may be able to provide solutions for LIS that meet their requirements and budget. For example, one LIS with a low budget was able to show maps, spatial information and boundary data in quite a sophisticated way despite not being able to afford a geographical data server due to the novel solutions of one supplier. Building good relationships with providers is also very important when ensuring that all requirements and any future changes can be met.

### Developing systems in-house

The benefits of not developing the system in house were expressed by one local authority in England as they suggested that external companies could spread future development costs across the other local authorities that they support and therefore start up costs could be reduced. This does however depend on the ability of a system/function to be replicated. However, some LIS in Scotland have been developed in-house as there was no dedicated budget for development.

### Licensing

For one LIS their licensing agreement has changed since they set up which has affected the costs they are paying. This highlights the importance of making sure you are clear on your licensing agreements from the beginning.

## 4. Development and testing

### Risks

A key challenge when developing the system yourself is uploading data. For example one LIS had problems with their ICT department as they would not allow them their own system to upload data when they wanted to and hence had to wait long periods to update their data. To overcome such problems one LIS has suggested having one person whose job would be to continuously update the data; whilst another LIS expressed the benefits of allowing each department to upload their own data as this increased their ownership of the process.

### Working with a third party

One LIS felt they had benefited from using a third party as they found that their needs were responded to and could always get hold of someone when needed. There was also built in flexibility if the authority decided to host the whole system in the future, as the design and development of the site was web based and not an integral part of the company infrastructure.

# Monitoring and Evaluation

## Resources

### 1. Funding

**Systems for monitoring spend**

Systems for monitoring spend should be developed in partnership agreements set up with your funders. You need to look at the appropriateness of your existing financial and reporting systems in conjunction with the funding and accounting requirements of your funders. You will need to show spending in your reporting (using the budget outline as part of this tool will provide guidance). The spend reports should take into account the development costs, staffing costs and maintenance costs.

### 3. Forward planning and sustainability

**Resources**

- This link has guidance on how to plan for sustainability.
- This document contains further information on sustainability planning.

To measure return on investment the costs of doing nothing should be used (developed during Business Case). This should then be compared to the funding analysis prepared for future funding needs. You should look at the LIS Value Assessment Tool to help clarify return on investment and impact of the LIS.

## People

### 1. Key roles and responsibilities

**Accountability**

It is recommended that there is a clear separation of roles within the LIS team. The skill sets of technicians, analysts and research officers can differ greatly. You need to ensure that the performance measures and targets for each of the roles are appropriate and develop ways of evidencing the effectiveness of inputs throughout the year. This will depend on your existing performance management structure but you may wish to consider how best these can be measured internally and through users of the LIS. A 360 degree process will enable you to gather views from all stakeholders and identify where there are areas of excellent performance and areas for improvement. Having a LIS manager that reports to a senior officer helps connect the LIS to the authority as a whole.

**Reviewing job descriptions**

In accordance with standard employment practice the job specifications should be under review after 6 and 12 months of the LIS being operational. Some of the information feeding into the reviews could be logging of time taken for tasks and performance against protocol targets as well as feedback from peers, and a range of users. You need to ensure that you consult with your HR department on your organisational practice and procedures.

## 2. Staff numbers and posts

### Ensuring sufficient personnel to run the LIS

One LIS consulted underestimated the staff requirements in the first year and found the LIS suffered as a result. At the end of the first year an investment was made in the staffing resources but this had not been budgeted for and further funding needed to be secured.

## 3. Training and development

### Evaluating training

Feedback from those taking the course should be used to measure the effectiveness of the training. You may already have existing systems in place to measure training interventions as part of your performance management structure. You need to ensure that you have spoken to your HR department on this issue.

Measuring the effectiveness of user training and development can be achieved through a number of ways. This could be measured for example by the number of additional queries or enquiries made about the system once a user has been through a training process. If using on-line guides and resources you could integrate a rating system or as part of user feedback, ask users to rate the quality and effectiveness of on-line resources. You should have in place a way of tracking common issues and training needs and find ways in which you could support those needs in the future – either by improving functionality or quality of data.

## 4. Users

### Establishing the usage of the LIS

One LIS noted that they received more requests from business than they had expected and the data they were requesting did not fit with the data they had thought businesses may want. To identify the data required from previously unidentified groups the LIS ran focus groups to establish future requirements. Building in user registration to your LIS could help you understand the audience and their requirements better over time. Regular feedback and monitoring systems will help you keep pace with the usage of your LIS across your users.

### Responding to needs

Maintaining regular communication with core users through focus groups and online feedback forms can help the LIS keep track of user needs. You may wish to consider segmenting your users so that appropriate responses are given to the right audience. Categorising users into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary groups will enable you to prioritise where you may need to change emphasis on data and functionality.

### Consulting users

Surveys of target audiences will show the extent of penetration by the LIS. Questioning target audiences on awareness and use of the LIS will reflect the effectiveness of the marketing and communications strategy.

| Resources |
| --- |
| Online feedback forms, monitoring of email and telephone enquiries could also be used to assess this. For example, a user satisfaction questionnaire for use by existing LIS was designed for the research stage of this LIS tool project. |