

## **Joint Commissioning Case Study**

### **Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole**

At LGR in 1997, an agreement was made to ensure that children and young people with sensory impairment could have their needs met by a single service covering three Local Authorities. The LAs of Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole jointly commissioned the Hearing and Vision Support services to provide that specialist support, with Dorset as the lead LA. A Joint Arrangement was drawn up with legal sign-off to commit all three LAs to the process, especially in terms of specification, schedules and risk. Since 1997, the agreement has been reviewed on several occasions and updated as necessary. The latest update is being completed between Oct and Dec 2013.

The advantage of a Joint Arrangement of this nature for 'low incidence / high specialism' needs such as sensory impairment, is that a strong and viable service can deliver across LA boundaries, providing a comprehensive package of support which would be difficult to replicate, particularly in a very small, unitary authority. It means that there are economies of scale in terms of staffing and resources, which allow the service to deploy a wide range of specialists with different skills and expertise, where a small LA would have difficulty in providing this. Equipment can be re-used across LA borders, placing it where it is most needed or shifting it to another location when a young person moves out of the education system in one of the three areas.

An arrangement which is jointly commissioned in this way provides consistency of delivery. Provided that the service is well-regarded (which it is), there is no local movement of parents across the three LAs trying to broker a better deal for their child with a hearing or vision impairment. Parents know that the service they receive is consistent across the three LA boundaries and report positively on their experiences.