



Partnership—A Better Way

One of SWAP's real strengths is that it is owned by its partners. Each partner has a real say in how the company is run through having a senior officer who becomes a director of the company, ensuring that SWAP is run in the interests of its owners. No fundamental changes to the company or fee increase can happen without unanimous approval.

SWAP is not alone in recognising the benefits of partnership working. Since SWAP was begun, in 2005, there has been a mushrooming of all sorts of local government partnerships. However, the biggest partnership by far in England and Wales is SWAP.

The Partnership's purpose is to help its partners and clients achieve their objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes, at an affordable cost.

SWAP enables its partners and clients to take advantage of the learning experiences of other Councils. The Partnership carries out a series of cross-partner reviews, which in addition to the usual audit review work, also seeks to identify areas of best practice and to share that knowledge with all its Partners. The result is better services for everyone.

The existing Partners and clients have already seen the advantages of adopting the Partnership approach to delivering audit services:

Specialist Auditors As well as experts in internal auditing and risk management, we also have two specialist in-house teams dedicated to information systems and counter-fraud audits.

Seamless Transition Having incorporated 24 partners in 12 years, SWAP is well used to integrating existing audit teams into the company. Our well-tried transition arrangements ensure 'business as usual'. By utilising our extensive resources, we can deploy additional staff to keep any disruption to a minimum.





Adding Value through the Partnership Approach

Value for Money. We have not raised our charges to our partners since we started. That's 12 years without any cost increases. We conservatively estimate that we have saved our partners more than £8M in internal audit costs to date.

Combined Assurance & Healthy Organisation. In conjunction with colleagues on the West of England Chief Internal Auditors Group, we have developed a very specialised audit that can identify the key strategic and operational risks that are most likely to fail. This comprehensive service is extremely popular with our partners.

A Team of Highly Qualified Professionals. Well over half our staff are Chartered Internal Auditors, Chartered Accountants or qualified in information systems auditing or counter-fraud. Most of the rest of our staff are part-qualified and continuing their training. This provides our partners with more flexible staffing to meet audit requirements. The scope of audits has also been widened from the traditional financial systems to include other areas such as the achievement of corporate objectives, customer service delivery, risk management and health & safety.

Acquired learning through identifying and sharing best practice has led to more standardised working procedures across all the partners and clients. The audit Partnership signposts examples of best practice at other partners and clients reducing the replication of work. No information is shared without the express permission of the parties concerned.

An important thing for any potential Partner or clients to recognise is that the Partnership is still an 'in-house' service offering a full range of internal audit and related services. The only difference is that there will be more experience, knowledge and skills to draw on.

As a wholly-owned public sector company, that's not-for-profit, we're here to serve the public interest with the best possible service at the lowest price. If you like what you've read, why not enquire further?

