

# SOLACE NI BUSINESS PLAN 2007 – 2009



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## Introduction

The SOLACE Group of companies is a membership organisation, a commercial services arm and a charitable trust.

**SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers)** is the representative body for senior strategic managers working in the public sector. The Society promotes public sector management excellence and provides professional development for its Members who come from all areas of the public sector. Whilst the vast majority of its members work in local government it also has members operating in senior positions in health authorities, police and fire authorities and central government. SOLACE spans all of the UK, having membership in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England.

**SOLACE Enterprises** is wholly owned by the Society and operates, in effect, as a "not for profit" public sector company. It provides high quality, customer-focused and practical support to local government, the public sector and the voluntary sector, both in the UK and internationally.

**The SOLACE Foundation** carries out educational and other work which falls within the charitable aspects of the Society's own objectives. Its trustees include Society nominees. The Foundation can provide grants and bursaries for travel and visits to other local authorities in the UK or abroad and for attendance at training events.

Members are drawn from a variety of professional backgrounds and are:

- Local authority Chief Executives
- Senior Executives of local authorities (or other related organisations)
- Members of related International organisations
- Past Service Members

SOLACE members elect a President and Key Office holders annually [Society Officers].

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The Director General of the Society is responsible for achievement of the Society's business plan. Formal decision-making and constitutional activity takes place through the Management Board.

**SOLACE Branches** provide the focus for regional activities and networking.

**Key UK Corporate objectives:**

- To grow the business through established 'product' lines and the further development of the new offerings introduced in 2006;
- To provide a suite of high quality events, tailored to the needs of the range of Society members and programme subscribers;
- To continue to represent Members and the profession to Central Government and Government Agencies / Stakeholders, in the UK and internationally;
- To deliver a comprehensive, value-driven Business Partners programme, expanding the number of Partners and the industry sectors they represent;
- To seek new opportunities to promote our mission of Excellence in Public Service;
- To pro-actively manage overhead costs, seeking efficiency savings and driving out costs where possible.

**SOLACE Northern Ireland**

SOLACE NI is the Northern Ireland branch of the Society. Founded in the 1970's SOLACE NI is the representative body for senior strategic managers working in local government. Its membership currently includes the 26 local council Chief Executives and Senior Managers, the Chief Executives of the Local Government Staff Commission, the NI Housing Executive, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and Arc 21.

The Society strives to promote excellence and expertise in local government management and provides a valuable forum for professional debate with partner organisations in the Province.

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SOLACE Northern Ireland aims to promote effective local government and to provide professional support and development opportunities to Chief Executives and Senior Managers.

SOLACE Northern Ireland subscribes to the corporate **key values**

1. Transformation and Leadership
2. Integrity and Courage
3. Judgement and responsibility
4. Vision and Creativity
5. Good Governance and Accountability
6. Learning and Capacity Building

### **SOLACE Northern Ireland Aims**

The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in Northern Ireland launched its first Development Plan in January 2004. The plan has been updated on a regular basis to ensure that the aims and objectives of SOLACE NI take cognizance of the changing environment of local government within Northern Ireland and in the wider UK and International context.

This Business Plan aims to provide strategic focus for members within the context of the challenges that the Review of Public Administration and modernisation agenda bring for the branch.

The Business Plan for 2007/2008 sets out a number of **key objectives** under the following themes

- Professional Development
- Partnership Development
- Customer Service
- Financial Accountability

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### **1. Professional Development**

To provide quality events that encourages personal training and development for Chief Executives and Senior Managers within Local Government

### **2. Partnership development**

To deliver a comprehensive, value driven Business Partners Programme and enhance partnership working with stakeholders

### **3. Customer Service**

To support Chief Executives and Senior Managers through the exchange of information, policy development and sharing of best practice.

### **4. Financial Accountability**

To ensure effective use of financial resources by management of branch finances in line with the SOLACE financial management systems to add value for members and to the organisation.

### **1. Professional Development**

***Aim: To provide quality events that encourages personal training and development for Chief Executives and Senior Managers within Local Government***

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### **Associated Objectives**

### **Action**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1.1 To identify the training and development needs of SOLACE members and senior managers within the local government sector that will encourage capacity building within public sector reforms. | LGSC to develop a template for Chief Executive development for delivery in Spring 2007. This will inform the programme for a Sector wide SOLACE NI Conference in the Autumn of 2007.        |
| 1.2 To hold a Chief Executive workshop in May 2007 that will deal with the current issues facing Chief Executives on a basis of personal career planning  | LGSC and SOLACE joint working to develop a workshop programme to cater for Chief Executive personal choices within career or retirement management  |
| 1.3 In partnership with LGSC, Chief Executives Forum and SOLACE Enterprises prepare a Conference programme on development and career management for November 2007.                              | Develop partnership working with LGSC, Chief Executives Forum and SOLACE Enterprises to produce a dynamic Conference Programme for November 2007.   |
| 1.4 To promote learning opportunities or seminars through The SOLACE Foundation, and ACE to be held in NI.  | Strengthen existing links with SOLCE UK to encourage exchange at a national and international level and promote SOLACE one day workshops in NI.   |
| 1.5 To develop an induction programme for new members   | To ensure that new members are aware of the opportunities offered by SOLACE and encourage participation in Branch activities through mentoring or guidance on branch issues as appropriate. |

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### Performance Measures and targets

Measure	Target	Owner	Note
Delivery of Spring Workshop	Before end May 2007	Executive Committee, LGSC & Policy Officer	
Delivery of Autumn Branch Conference	Before end November 2007	Conference Committee, Policy Officer & SOLACE Enterprises	
Promote learning opportunities within NI	December 07	Executive Committee, Policy Officer	
Develop an Induction Programme for new members	June 07	Executive Committee, Policy Officer	

### Assumptions

**Workshop** – The venue and existing SOLACE and LGSC staff are available and the programme is acceptable to members.

**Conference** – The venue and sufficient experienced staff including SOLACE UK are available to manage the Conference project timetable.

### Risk Management

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Action Plan
Venues unavailable	Low	Critical	Ensure that venues are booked and contact maintained with venue manager against timetable.
Loss of experienced staff	Low	Marginal	Staff management systems in place
Unable to attract UK seminars or attendees	Medium	Critical	Ensure accessibility in cost, venue and advertising.
Lack of Chief	Medium	Critical	Ensure support is available in

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Executive availability to deliver induction			several formats
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**2. To deliver a comprehensive, value driven Business Partners Programme and enhance partnership working with stakeholders**

**Aim: To strengthen partnerships with stakeholders in the public and private sector.**

**Associated Objective**

**Action**

2.1 To maintain a strong relationship with NILGA

To continue to provide support in the form of Chief Executive Advisors.

Executive Committee to meet on a quarterly basis with the NILGA Office Bearers.

Members to attend the NILGA full meetings when possible and continue to sit on working groups as nominated.

2.2 To maintain strong relationships with central government.

To continue to meet central government representatives on a regular basis to respond to the RPA implementation plan.

2.3 To respond to key requests and documents in line with SOLACE protocol

The Chairman, Secretary and Policy Officer will bring any relevant documents to the attention of Branch Members for consideration and response.

2.4 To strengthen the partnership with Chief Executives Forum on issues of mutual interest within RPA.

Chairman to establish links with Chief Executives forum and take forward joint working, exchange of information and sharing of best practice in areas of mutual interest within RPA agenda.

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2.5 To strengthen the working relationship with SOLACE UK to enhance branch performance and delivery of objectives

Policy officer to strengthen the links with other UK branches to enhance the delivery of branch objectives through sharing best practice and experience.

2.6 To strengthen and utilise the working relationship with Business Partners Consilium and PWC

To add value to the relationships through workshops and opportunities for access to local government and through participation in the Autumn Conference.

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### 3. Customer Service

**Aim:**

**To support Chief Executives and Senior Managers through the exchange of information, policy development and sharing of best practice**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>
3.1 To Respond to the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland	To continue to maintain a high profile within the RPA advisory roles with Local Government, Central Government and Ministers, through the establishment of strong and proactive relationships.
3.2 To respond to policy and consultation documents and other correspondence in line with SOLACE protocol.	To review the protocol and maintain branch contribution to policy development.
3.3 To facilitate the appointments to outside bodies to which SOLACE are nominated.	To continue to actively participate in the programme of nominations to outside bodies
3.4 To promote active membership of SOLACE NI with Chief Executives and Senior Managers	To raise the image of SOLACE membership as a professional body within local government through membership recruitment, induction and promotion of SOLACE opportunities for graduates and ACE membership.
3.5 To proactively engage with SOLACE UK and on an international basis	To maintain regular meetings, exchanges and links with SOLACE UK staff and members.

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## 4. Financial Accountability

**Aim: To manage branch finances in line with SOLACE management systems and ensure effective use of resources to add value for members and to the organisation.**

### Objective

### Action

4.1 Financial Centralisation

To review the management of the Branch Accounts in line with recent SOLACE centralised accounting procedures. Review Branch payments management to accommodate expenditure incurred for accommodation, services and equipment for the policy officer post.

4.2 Membership & Fees

To review the membership numbers, additional fees and associated membership benefits.

4.3 Branch Corporate Partnership

To monitor the branch commitment to the number and value of corporate partnerships on an ongoing basis.

4.4 Branch Events

To improve financial management of branch events to include corporate partners and add value for branch membership and stakeholders

4.5 SOLACE Foundation Grant

To re-evaluate the funding for the policy officer post with SOLACE and secure funding until 2009

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