

PRIMARY AUTHORITY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Primary Authority?

Primary Authority is a means for businesses to receive assured and tailored advice on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through a single point of contact. This ensures start-ups get it right at the outset and enables all businesses to invest with confidence in products, practices and procedures, knowing that the resources they devote to compliance are well spent.

Primary Authority is based on legal partnerships between businesses and individual local authorities. Businesses can set up their own partnership or belong to a trade association (or other type of group) with an existing partnership.

Primary Authority was launched in 2009 to make the local regulation of businesses operating at multiple premises across the UK more consistent. Building on the success of the scheme the eligibility criteria for Primary Authority have been expanded and from 1 October 2017 all businesses can now benefit from Primary Authority.

Who can enter a partnership?

Partnerships are available to any type of business, whether starting out or established, as well as other types of organisation such as charities and trade associations.

Regulators that can become primary authorities include county, district and unitary councils, and fire and rescue authorities.

What are the two types of partnership?

A business can form its own direct partnership. It then receives Primary Authority Advice tailored to its specific needs from its primary authority.

Alternatively, a business can belong to a trade association (or other type of group) to benefit from a co-ordinated primary authority. In this case, the Primary Authority Advice is still from the primary authority, but provided via the trade association, and tailored to the general needs of its members.

A business can choose the type of partnership best suited to its needs. Most businesses only have one partnership, but it is possible to be in different partnerships for different areas of regulation.

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What do primary authorities do?

Primary authorities provide advice to businesses that other local regulators must respect on compliance with the regulations. They can also produce an inspection plan for a business or the members of a trade association (or other type of group), to improve the effectiveness of visits by local regulators and underpin better sharing of information.

What are the benefits of Primary Authority?

Businesses:

- have access to relevant, authoritative tailored advice
- gain recognition of robust compliance arrangements
- can draw on an established and effective means of meeting business regulations
- can be more confident they are protecting themselves and their customers

Regulators:

- have greater clarity over where responsibility lies
- can support local economic growth through stronger business relationships
- can improve the consistency of local regulation and target resources on high-risk areas
- can develop their staff expertise via partnerships
- can protect front line services through cost recovery

Citizens:

- are better protected as businesses find it easier to comply with legislation
- are at reduced risk as local authorities better understand the businesses they regulate and can target resources on high-risk areas

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What is the Primary Authority Register?

The Primary Authority Register is the secure online service that supports the operation of the scheme. It contains details on every partnership, provides a forum for communications, and allows primary authorities to make key documents and business information readily available to local regulators.

How are national regulators involved?

Since decisions taken by primary authorities can impact on the way businesses are regulated in general, they are required to take account of guidance from relevant national regulators when providing advice and creating inspection plans.

National regulators are a source of expertise for primary authorities, while primary authorities can help national regulators better understand and engage with businesses.

How is Regulatory Delivery involved?

Regulatory Delivery exercises the statutory responsibility for the operation of Primary Authority on behalf of the Secretary of State, nominating partnerships, issuing guidance and resolving determinations. It also manages the Primary Authority Register.

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