

## **Impact and Evaluation – Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Operational Assessment Peer Review Programme – 2009/10**

1. The FRS Operational Assessment peer review programme is delivered in the spirit of sector led improvement. This approach and the partnership with CFOA has now further developed and matured to incorporate the FRS Diversity Peer Challenge programme based on the joint CFOA/IDeA Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services.
2. The programme also makes use of the local government sector's existing Peer Clearing House (PCH) competencies, assessment framework and peer feedback mechanisms to assure and maintain the quality and effectiveness of the FRS peer pool. These mechanisms have recently been reviewed by a member panel.
3. It is intended that impact and evaluation reports will be produced now annually and that they and the IDeA systems supporting their production will contribute to the assurance model required by the CLG Chief Fire Adviser (CFRA).
4. Since September 2009 a further regional peer training programme was held and 50 per cent of chief fire officers are now peers. IDeA, working with CFOA, is continuing to boost the peer pool with fire and rescue peers, both members and officers, trained to undertake the Diversity peer challenge programme. There is a great demand from the sector to have more officer peer training provided and to get more staff involved in peer reviews as this is viewed as a significant development opportunity which is borne out in the evaluation process.
5. An important aspect of the programme, which has been under development and will be shortly published, is joint work between CFOA and IDeA on knowledge management through the promotion of notable practice using case studies.

### **Feedback and Evaluation System**

6. The IDeA's tried and tested Corporate Peer Review feedback and evaluation systems have been adapted for the fire and rescue peer review programme. This consists of online evaluation surveys for review managers, all peer review team members, the key FRS contact and where there has been member engagement, the chairman or portfolio holder. In addition, the chief fire officer is contacted for an evaluation survey telephone call.
7. The IDeA Peer Clearing House is responsible for monitoring the competency of all peers and their feedback on the peer review process through their established systems. An electronic feedback survey is sent to all peers on a review team to complete which consists of a self assessment of performance against the core peer competencies as well opportunity for qualitative comment on the process and the experience. The IDeA review manager also rates the performance of the peer against the competencies and makes an overall comment on performance, which is fed back to the peer. Qualitative feedback on the review process is also gathered from this process and is fed into the development of the review.

## **Quality**

8. Feedback collated during 2009/10 for end of year evaluation has been highly positive:

Overall satisfaction:

- 93% overall satisfaction with the review from chief fire officers
- 100% overall satisfaction with the review from elected members
- 86% of chief fire officers stated that the review met their original objectives
- 93% of chief fire officers would recommend the IDeA to other FRS's considering a peer review
- 83% of elected member representatives strongly agreed that they would recommend the IDeA to other FRS's considering a peer review.

## **An opportunity for learning**

9. Peer review is seen as an effective way to share and transfer learning and expertise. We recognise that the sector has the experience and expertise to drive its own improvement. Through the peer review officer and member peers help other FRS's, improve and develop their own skills in the process.

## **Change, improvement and impact**

10. The Operational Assessment Peer Review has a specific remit around the newly established Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOES) in the Toolkit developed by CFRA. These are:

- Community Risk Management
- Prevention
- Protection
- Response
- Health & Safety
- Training & Development
- Call Management and Incident Support.

## **Equality and Diversity**

11. Equality and diversity is an identified area for development for FRS's. The IDeA peer review model strives to ensure that equality and diversity issues are taken into account in the process and onsite activities. Equality and diversity is a cross cutting theme in the Operational Assessment Toolkit. 93% of chief fire officers 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' that the peer review gave appropriate consideration to equalities and diversity whilst the remaining respondents neither agreed or disagreed with this statement.

12. IDeA promote equality and diversity through it's work in developing the new Equality Framework for Local Government and together with CFOA the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework and the new FRS Diversity Peer Challenge to measure achievement against the new Framework. FRS's are fully engaging in this process.

## **Value for money**

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13. A guidance manual is provided for the client FRS and to team members. Review team managers give support to the FRS in preparing for the review through sourcing peers, scoping meetings, input into the timetable and feedback on the self assessment s prior to the onsite activity. After the onsite activity a detailed report is produced for the FRS using the IDeA's corporate quality assurance processes.

14. The cost of an Operational Assessment peer review is £11,200, which includes 11 consultant days and five member peer days. Many FRS's have had the peer reviews funded by the RIEP's. The Operational Assessment peer review is seen as providing good value for money with 72% of the chief fire officers 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with this statement.

## **Further development**

15. IDeA continue to work to ensure that the Operational Assessment peer reviews are delivered to the highest standard and represent good value for money, while increasing satisfaction ratings both in terms of quality and impact.

16. A number of recommendations for improvement to the peer review process have also been captured as part of this evaluation process by a number of partners, these are identified below:

- A programme of fire officer peer mentoring to be implemented after the review to provide ongoing support for CFO's and senior fire officers.
- The potential for replication of information on the KLOE's and the cross cutting issues needs to be recognised and dealt with in some way to make the process of the review easier and to be clearly identified in the final report
- To make more emphasis of the notable practice identified during the peer review process in the report
- Further time to allow for pre-reading as there have been cases where the documentation has been sent from the FRS with only a few days spare before the review takes place
- A pre-meeting for the review team two weeks before the review to discuss the process of the review, timetable and the strengths and areas for improvement for the FRS could be a handy addition to the process and may help to take some of the pressure of the team during the review
- Additional Peers on the team with knowledge and experience around 'Partnership working' and 'Sustainable Community Engagement' to recognise the changing role of the sector
- A thirty minute debrief with the client on each day of the review could help the flow of the process and provide an opportunity for the client to signpost to additional resources where possible
- Agree timetable for peer review at an earlier stage to sufficiently involve external partners from outside of the service in the process

17. It is anticipated that this peer review will continue to evolve and improve through these ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Following feedback and evaluation processes the following changes have been made to the FRS operational assessment peer review programme:

- Improved engagement with FRA elected members in the review process through providing clear briefing for member peers on their role and ensuring interviews cover political and partnership dimensions fully

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- Ensured the full credibility of the process by working with CFOA to have CFO's lead the reviews wherever possible and providing three additional qualification events targeted at CFO's
- Revised the review guidance to reflect the need to work in three streams to ensure all operational elements are covered and the process is robust
- Provided additional training and briefing to review managers to ensure that the focus of questioning is on operational issues and not corporate, a major difference with this review
- Work closely with PCH, CFOA and the client to ensure that all qualified peers have an opportunity to participate in the review programme and that there is sufficient skills, experience, role and gender balance in the teams
- Provided top tips on self assessment for the sector disseminated through the website and offer of additional pre-review support with self assessment to improve the overall quality of self assessments
- Improved scoping meeting with the client through involvement of the lead peer and principal officers to ensure awareness of sector led improvement principles and the differences with inspection to effectively manage expectations
- Ongoing capturing of notable practice from the review programme in partnership with CFOA
- More effective communication and liaison with Audit Commission to improve programming of different streams of activity and use of the peer pool across the year
- A new question around the benefit of involving peers from other sectors such as the Police and PCT's was included in the evaluation process from January 2010. This was received by all those who responded with much enthusiasm stating that it would only bring about added value for the Fire sector and those other sectors involved in understanding how the public sector must work closer together in the current climate.

18. As referred to in the report IDeA is continuing to develop the partnership with CFOA through establishing the FRS Diversity Peer Challenge programme which will roll out in 2010/11 and is based on the same principles, QA and evaluation systems as Operational Assessment.

## **OpA Peer Reviews completed 2009/10**

19. Below is a list of the OpA peer reviews completed for 2009/10:

- West Midlands FRS; London Fire Brigade; Hereford and Worcestershire FRS; Cheshire FRS; Derbyshire FRS; Warwickshire FRS; Staffordshire FRS; Cleveland Fire Brigade; Bedfordshire & Luton FRS; Greater Manchester FRS; Hertfordshire FRS; Royal Berkshire FRS; Buckinghamshire FRS; Northumberland FRS; Hampshire FRS; South Yorkshire FRS; Isle of Wight FRS; Lancashire FRS; West Sussex FRS; Durham & Darlington FRS; Humberside FRS.

## **OpA Peer Reviews booked for 2010/11**

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20. Below is a list of the OpA peer reviews booked for 2010/11:

- Kent FRS; Merseyside FRS; Nottinghamshire FRS; Oxfordshire FRS; Cornwall FRS; Surrey FRS; Tyne & Wear FRS; Cambridgeshire FRS; West Yorkshire FRS; Dorset FRS; Essex FRS (tbc).

## **CFOA and IDeA Notable Practice case studies from the Operational Assessment Peer Review programme**

21. Below is a list of published and jointly badged Notable Practice case studies collected from the OpA peer review programme 2009/10. Further case studies are in development

### Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service

- Provision of a dedicated House in Multiple Occupation Fire Safety Officer
- Improved awareness of fire risks and targeting of the Arson Task Force
- Operational crews undertaking low and medium level risk audits
- Strong joint working with the crime reduction team via a Licensing Initiative
- The attendance of control staff at incidents to undertake control and incident support functions

### Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service

- Engineering academy
- Cleveland Fire Support Network
- Home Fire Safety Visits – removal of targets and use of local knowledge

### Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

- Audit process
- 'Drive to arrive' policy
- Inter-agency liaison officers
- Debrief Process

### Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service

- Violence and Alcohol Harm Licensing Partnership
- Yes! Scheme
- Handy Van Network

### West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service

- Risk Management Public Website

### Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

- Targeted Response Vehicle (TRV)

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