

South-East Fire Improvement Partnership

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Introducing the Peer Review Brokering Service

The South East Fire Improvement Partnership is pleased to announce the launch of a new service for Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Peer Review Brokering Service will provide easy access to accredited peer reviewers to critically assess an authority's approach to a topic. Contained in this newsletter is an explanation of the benefits of peer review and what it could do for your Authority.

Why Peer Review?

The concept of peer review is simple: a peer is a critical friend, someone that understands the issues and challenges. Working with peers helps an authority to assess itself objectively and pinpoint its strengths and weaknesses, without creating the interrogative environment of an external inspection.

Peer review is seen by the Audit Commission as one way of reducing the burden of inspection on local authorities. The recent local government White Paper and the subsequent bill discusses in some detail the use of peer review as a way of allowing local government to deal with its own performance.

Many authorities will have undergone a peer review as part of the Audit Commission Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2005. These were provided by SOLACE, the Improvement and Development Agency or Excellence in Business. The peer review can be tailored to the specific needs of the FRA.

What's in it for Authorities?

FRAs will probably already have commissioned internal reviews for the coming business year and may want to use this work as the basis for a peer review. FRAs will benefit from an independent assessment of an area of local concern, in a way that is controllable, yet rigorous. FRAs will set the terms of the review, SEFIP will get you a team, arrange dates and liaise

with contractors in the development stages. SEFIP will also make sure that delivery timescales for final reports are met.

One of the biggest benefits will be if existing staff form part of the peer review team for another FRA.

SEFIP will provide up to £10K to fund each of the first 3 reviews commissioned via the peer brokering service. This payment will cover all charges for service from peer reviewers not employed by Fire and Rescue Authorities. After this we will provide a brokering service free of charge.

Who will SEFIP be using?

We will bring in the most appropriate people for the review you want to run. These might be officers from other organisations, elected member peer reviewers, performance and audit specialists, or whosoever might be best placed to provide you with the service you require.

What type of review can I do?

Outside of any existing work already commissioned, other areas that could be reviewed include:

- Operational preparedness
- Member Engagement and Development
- Community Engagement
- The effectiveness of Community Safety Activities
- Cross-border working arrangements
- Mutual Aid Agreements
- Corporate Risk Management

These are just suggestions, and in reality you will probably already have ideas of what your organisation might benefit from.

To apply for a peer review, simply contact one of the improvement team, using the details in the box below.

Remember the first 3 FRAs to commission a review will benefit from a subsidised review!

For more information about SEFIP please contact a member of the Improvement Team

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