

South East Fire Improvement Partnership



Issue 8 July 2007

Peer Review Brokering Service - Update

The Peer Review Brokering Service was introduced in issue 6 of the South East Fire Improvement Partnership newsletter. We wanted to let you know about some recent developments, and alert you to the continued availability of funding for peer review projects brokered through the scheme.

Where are we now?

Using the South East Centre of Excellence (SECE) portal, we issued a tender for peer review team leaders. From the expressions of interest received, we have selected 4 organisations to provide peer review services. Details of those we selected, and some background information about the companies can be found in the column to the right.

Funding support

So far one review has been commissioned and we are working on the detail with this authority. A further two reviews can be supported with funding of £10k per review on a first come, first served basis.

You may be aware that the Audit Commission has recently issued a document setting out the Commission's approach for assessing how fire and rescue authorities are modernising in 2007 and 2008. It will report the results in early 2008 and then again in early 2009.

The document does not address how the Commission will seek to recategorise FRAs that are showing signs of significant and sustainable improvement. The Commission will publish its arrangements for recategorising FRAs, through a corporate assessment, in August 2007.

The revised framework places a requirement on FRAs to submit self-assessments across three themes, depending on local circumstances and previous assessment results, during September 2007.

You may wish to utilise the peer review brokering service operated by SEFIP to test some of the outcomes of your self-assessment. If this is the case, please contact a member of the Improvement Team (contact details can be found below).

As you can see we have changed the format of the newsletter to coincide with the SEFIP website. If you have any comments about this or any of the information contained in this newsletter, just let us know.

The South - East Fire Improvement Partnership was formed in January 2006 and is made up of the 9 Fire & Rescue Services in the South - East. Work of the partnership is funded by Communities & Local Government, and the Local Government Association through Capacity Building Funds.

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The Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) works for Local Government improvement so councils

can serve people and places better. They use experienced councillors and senior officers, known as peers, who support and challenge councils to improve themselves. The Agency offers a range of peer reviews, such as preparation for corporate assessments, improvement planning assistance, and external challenge events.

The IDeA has undertaken over 300 peer reviews in 160 local authorities, together with specialist sector specific reviews, adapted to a range of different services and operating contexts.



Over the last ten years, **Excellence in Business** has been at the forefront of using internal and external challenge to drive improvement as well as help prepare for inspection, assessment

and scrutiny across both the public and private sector. They have developed a robust approach built on the need to ensure that any review activity is properly integrated into normal operations and not seen simply as a hoop to jump through in the lead up to any form of inspection. Excellence in Business strive to integrate the peer review with the client's own business and improvement processes in order that activity is used to drive these processes. The result is greater ownership, improved communication, real added value and the opportunity to demonstrate how the process itself has led to improved self-awareness and can demonstrate real capacity to improve.



Solace enterprises is the provider of choice for many authorities engaged in exercises to orient their services to the needs of 21st century customers and to match legislative needs. The experience of its consultants and its close link with

councils and fire and rescue authorities around the country ensure that they can offer a flexible and relevant response to customers needs.

The model of peer challenge used by Solace has been applied in over 100 peer challenges including recent work with unitary and county council authorities on the latest CPA methodology. Its associates were involved in the development of the fire and rescue CPA process and in undertaking peer challenges as part of this process.



Jonathan Nulty leads a management consultancy specialising in peer review activities and project/ programme management. He has a

wealth of experience with the Institute of Public Finance (IPF), and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

He and his associates offer experience in taking a robust, objective perspective of service delivery arrangements, governance and organisation. They also have bring with them experience of working with public sector organisations including fire and rescue authorities.