

Report title: Impact and Evaluation - Corporate Peer Review Programme

Summary

1. This report provides an update on the corporate peer review programme assessing the impact it is having on the council's receiving peer reviews. It highlights how the programme is responding to the key issues at the forefront of local government. In addition, the report considers feedback from chief executives and other council contacts.
2. The data used in this report cover the period April 2007 – March 2008.

Background

3. In 2007/08 there was increased demand for corporate peer reviews and challenges. **IDeA delivered a total of 47 corporate peer reviews and challenges last year**, including 19 peer reviews and challenges in unitary and county councils, 17 peer reviews for district councils and a further 9 peer challenges and CA preparation challenges, supporting district councils to prepare for corporate assessment. From this point on this report will use the term 'corporate peer review' to refer to the whole suite of products.
4. IDeA continues to review and update the corporate peer review programme. In the past year this includes significant improvements made to the feedback and evaluation process, in particular in assessing the impact of corporate peer reviews and challenges.

IDeA's reputation for corporate peer review remains strong – why councils chose the IDeA

"Two reasons really - in preparation for our corporate assessment and to assist in our change programme. It was the IDeA because of their reputation on peer review" Steve Atkinson, Hinckley and Bosworth Council

"We wanted to benchmark our performance and prepare for the CPA.....we chose the IDeA as we had a good experience of them in the past. The IDeA are well respected in the sector." Graham Burgess, Blackburn with Darwen Council

Quality

5. The feedback IDeA has received for the quality and impact of its corporate peer review work has been highly positive. The satisfaction rating among chief executives

is high, with **91% of chief executives 'satisfied' or 'highly satisfied'** with their IDeA corporate peer review.

6. IDeA continues to work to ensure all its 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. **100% of council contacts reported that the expertise and knowledge of IDeA peers was excellent or good.**
7. A key output of corporate peer review and an important indicator of quality is the verbal feedback (presentation) by the peer review team and the peer review report. **93% of council contacts said that the quality of the IDeA's presentation and report was 'good' or 'excellent'.**
8. Feedback on IDeA review managers, from councils and peer review team members, is positive - **99% of all peers said that support of the review manager was 'excellent' or 'good'.**

IDeA corporate peer review is achieving success and meeting objectives

".....it did completely meet our objectives; it was a very intelligent, competent team. It offered constructive criticism and raised issues that we did not pick up on." Roger Taylor, Interim Chief Executive, London Borough of Waltham Forest

".....it was successful, the peer review identified certain strengths and weaknesses and gave us the legitimacy to change." Keith Ross, Leader, West Somerset District Council

"Very successful. The objective was to make sure that we were prepared for the Corporate Assessment" Joanna Simons, Chief Executive, Oxfordshire County Council

An opportunity for learning

9. Corporate peer review is seen as an effective way to share and transfer learning and expertise. Members and officer who participate in corporate peer review value the learning opportunities it provides for them and their councils. **97% of peers on corporate peer reviews agreed being a member of a review team has provided them with learning they will take back to their local authority.**
10. Corporate peer review is also seen as a good tool for sharing ideas and practice. All the peers who responded to the survey were positive about the opportunities peer reviews provide to share ideas and as improvement tools across the sector. Over half of these described peer review as an excellent or good tool for this purpose.
11. As well as the learning opportunities peer review provides for the authorities concerned and for review team members, we have strengthened our systems for identifying potential good practice We publish reports on IDeA Knowledge, we have revised and updated our corporate peer review web pages this year .

12.

Change, improvement and impact

13. Corporate peer review is seen as a catalyst for change, with positive feedback received from a number of councils on how reviews helped to shift the status quo.

IDeA's corporate peer review is a catalyst for change

"We used the peer review to plan improvements and put in place a robust intellectual framework for performance management and project planning. It has started the process for changing the culture." Jeremy Jaroszek, Erewash Borough Council

14. Corporate peer review is having a positive impact. The impact of corporate peer review as an effective improvement tool is backed up by the feedback we gather from the council who receive them **95% of chief executives (interviewed by IDeA) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that there would be a long-term positive impact as a result of the review.**

15. The corporate peer review programme is meeting the objectives of individual councils and local government in delivering sector led improvement support.:

- **100% of council contacts said that our peer teams have delivered the agreed outputs to an 'excellent' to 'satisfactory' standard.**
- **90% of chief executives providing feedback 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the corporate peer review met all their original objectives.**

16. Corporate peer review informs improvement planning within authorities. Councils tell us the process is instrumental in driving forward improvements. The verbal feedback and reports are used to build action plans for improvement and in some cases form the basis of preparations for corporate assessment. **99% of peers on review teams feel that the review process was 'excellent' or 'good' at identifying the key issues for the authority.**

On the impact of the peer review on the council's improvement activity

"Significant impact, it has given us a significant impetus. There is now evidence to support change.....it helped us measure progress" Julian Wain, Gloucester City Council

"Peer review was made the subject of a report to the Executive with an action plan. There was extensive feedback to staff." Kevin Crompton, Luton Borough Council

".....we put in place proper preparation for CPA and project planning. We cascaded the information to all staff andengaged members about the report.....we used the report and verbal feedback to identify gaps, used it as a gap analysis." Jeremy Jaroszek, Erewash Borough Council

“The objectives were to prepare for the corporate assessment next year and identify areas of improvement. Overall the objectives have been met the peer review has been good in helping us realise what we have to do.” Sheila Healey, Chief Executive, Cornwall County Council

Value for money

17. The corporate peer review programme is continually being developed to ensure that the guidance, tools and techniques we use are relevant and up-to-date. IDeA are currently in the process of reviewing and updating the corporate peer review benchmark to reflect the new duties and expectations on local government and to reflect current good practice. As CPA is replaced by CAA, this process will continue to keep corporate peer review relevant and in line with the current legislative and regulatory framework. We have also updated the review managers guidelines, guidance for local authorities and peer team guidelines.
18. IDeA’s corporate peer reviews are seen as providing good value for money. Just as councils are working hard to ensure value for money in the services they provide, we seek to ensure our peer reviews represent good value for money for councils. Peer review also provide a focus on value for money issues as specific quality improvements. In a number of regions, peer reviews have also been funded by Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships.
 - **85% of chief executives ‘strongly agree’ that IDeA corporate peer reviews provide good value for money.**
 - **Overall, 95% of Chief Executive’s said that they would recommend the IDeA to other councils considering a peer review.**

For further information

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Appendix 1: Corporate Peer Review Evaluation Data 2007/08

EV1 - 17 Council Contact forms:	
How well did we meet your expectations? (n.b 10 respondents)	5 Excellent (55%) 5 Good (45%)
Overall satisfaction with the project? (n.b 7 respondents)	4 Excellent (57%) 2 Good (29%) 1 Satisfactory (14%)
How well did the project meet your objectives? (n.b 7 respondents)	5 Excellent (71%) 2 Good (29%)
Expertise/knowledge of IDeA team members	10 Excellent (59%) 7 Good (41%)
Expertise/knowledge of Peers (1 non-answer)	10 Excellent (63%) 6 Good (37%)
Effectiveness of IDeA to manage the project	10 Excellent (59%) 7 Good (41%)
Quality of presentations/reports (2 non-answers)	8 Excellent (53%) 7 Good (40%)
Delivery of agreed outputs (1 non-answer)	11 Excellent (69%) 4 Good (25%) 1 Satisfactory (6%)
EV2 - 38 Review Manager evaluation forms (out of 43 sent - 88% reply rate):	
What aspects of the peer review went well? Are there any aspects of the peer review process that could be improved?	25 (2/3rds of) RMs specifically praised their teams Replies included problems sourcing peers or last minute replacements (x6), the authority not arranging workshops and that the authority was disorganised.
EV3 - 21 Chief Exec and 1 Leader (West Somerset) phone calls:	
The peer review met all my original objectives (1 non-answer)	19 Strongly Agree or Agree (90%) 2 Disagree (10%)
The peer review was well managed by the review team	21 Strongly Agree or Agree (95%) 1 Neither Agree or Disagree (5%)
The quality and experience of the peer review team was evident	19 Strongly Agree or Agree (86%) 3 Neither Agree or Disagree (14%)
The peer review provided insightful well-evidenced findings that will support future improvement	20 Strongly Agree or Agree (91%) 2 Neither Agree or Disagree (9%)
There will be a long-term positive impact from the peer review	21 Strongly Agree or Agree (95%) 1 Neither Agree or Disagree (5%)

The peer review provided good value for money (2 no answers)	17 Strongly Agree or Agree (85%) 2 Neither Agree or Disagree (10%) 1 Disagree (5%)
I would recommend the IDeA to other council's considering a peer review	21 Strongly Agree or Agree (95%) 1 Neither Agree or Disagree (5%)
Please could you tell me how satisfied you were overall with the peer review/peer challenge/ CA Prep Challenge	20 Highly Satisfied or Satisfied (91%) 2 Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied (9%)
EV4 - 86 Team Member evaluation forms (out of 145 sent - 59% reply rate):	
'How well informed were you about the process of the review and the progress of your visit?' 5 other responses (6%)	30 Excellent (35%) 51 Good (59%)
'If you contacted the IDeA to ask about any area of the review, how good was the response?' (11 no answers)	27 Excellent (36%) 41 Good (55%) 7 Average (9%)
'How good did you find the IDeA's administrative arrangements for the visit?' 9 other responses (total 11%)	38 Excellent (44%) 39 Good (45%)
How good did you find the authority's administrative arrangements for the visit?	13 Excellent (15%) 37 Good (43%) 26 Average (30%) 9 Poor (11%) 1 Very Poor (1%)
How good was the hotel? (1 no answer)	9 Excellent (11%) 23 Good (27%) 42 Average (49%) 11 Poor (13%)
'How good was the support of the Review Manager?' (2 no answers)	65 Excellent (77%) 18 Good (22%) 1 Average (1%)
How effective was the review process in identifying key issues for the authority?	32 Excellent (37%) 53 Good (62%) 1 Average (1%)
How would you rate peer reviews for sharing ideas and improvement tools across the sector? (n.b. 67 respondents)	36 specifically mention Excellent or Good (54%) 19 other approving comments
Being a member of a peer review team has provided me with learning that I will take back to my own organisation (n.b. 67 respondents & 1 no answer)	71 Agree (97%) 1 Disagree (1.5%) 1 Don't know (1.5%)