National Evaluation of the Capacity Building
Programme for Local Government
Annex 2: Evaluation of the National Programmes

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- **Sarah Kelsey** who undertook case study fieldwork and assisted with the production of the final report.
- **Martin Purcell**, **Dr Lynne Dowson**, **Murray Hawtin, Sally-Anne Halliday and Amanda Stevens** at the Policy Research Institute who all undertook fieldwork.
- **Dr David Sweeting, Laura Evans, Dr Ian Smith and Maggie Rust** at the Cities Research Centre who all undertook case study fieldwork.
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Abbreviations

ADP	Accelerated Development Programme.
ALP	Advanced Leadership Programme.
CBP	Capacity Building Programme for Local Government.
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government. Formerly known as the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).
EO	Employers Organisation for Local Government.
FLP	Future Leadership Programme
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency.
INLOGOV	Institute for Local Government Studies.
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. ODPM became the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 5 May 2006.
OPM	Office for Public Management

Executive Summary

Introduction and background

The report is one of a series of outputs from the national evaluation of the CBP, being undertaken by a team of researchers at the Policy Research Institute (PRI) at Leeds Metropolitan University and the Cities Research Unit at the University of West of England. The Capacity Building Programme for local government was launched in 2003 as a joint Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) / Local Government Association (LGA) initiative to support capacity building and improvement activities within local authorities in England. The evaluation of the Capacity Building Programme has been underway since late 2004. A scoping phase was conducted until May 2005, including a short evaluation of the Pilot Programmes. The main phase of the evaluation commenced in September 2005 and encompassed four main phases (see Section 1.3: p10).

Methodology and key research questions

The evaluation methodology for the National Programmes was multi-levelled as the evaluation sought to pursue a Theory of Change approach (see Section 3). The Capacity Building Programme has a number of different Theories of Change in operation covering the CBP as a whole on the one hand and each National Programme on the other. Therefore it was also necessary to develop a multi-levelled framework that could accommodate these different Theories of Change.

A case study methodology was developed to encourage maximum participation. Triangulation was achieved by a number of methods. Firstly, structured interviews were held not just with beneficiaries but also with their line managers and respondents were able to give a corporate view, across the local authority. In addition, documentary sources such as organisational training and staff or organisational development plans and the Corporate Performance Assessments which form part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process were reviewed to gain supplementary evidence of organisational change.

At the outset of the main phase of the evaluation, the following key research questions were set by the client:

1. Is the programme comprehensive in meeting demand for capacity building from local authorities?
2. How is the national programme being delivered?
3. To what extent is the national programme meeting its objectives?
4. What is the added value of the national programme?

5.   How are the various elements of the national programme working in isolation and together as well as with the local and regional work that has been commissioned?

6.   What is the impact of the national programme on the sector, networks of authorities, individual authorities and on individuals who take part in its initiatives?

7.   Is the national programme cost effective and does it offer value for money?

8.   How the CBP promotes equality and diversity; the shared priorities, efficiency and sustainability?

Throughout, the evaluation work concerned with the National Programmes has sought to answer these questions and they form the basis for the conclusion.

The research consisted of a provider consultation which involved structured interviews with representatives of each of the National Programmes providers (see Section 2.3). Interviews with providers were also used as a means of collecting information about participation in the projects and any other evaluation that was undertaken.

Development, Management and Delivery of National Programmes

The National Programmes developed in the context of the need to deliver the CBP quickly, however the initial structure of the programmes changed several time during the development of the CBP (see Section 3.1).

The management of the CBP has suffered from a lack of continuity of key staff and there is evidence that the clarity of the information and procedures for accessing support through the CPB has suffered in light of this. Programme providers seemed to be confused about the changing emphasis of CBP with some having established their programmes to fit with the initial logic and then being frustrated as the CBP continued to evolve. Providers also stated that they were not given appropriate guidance on required performance and monitoring, there were some concerns regarding financial mechanisms which clearly undermined the capacity of central government to manage the National Programmes effectively (see Section 3.4). These are key learning points for CBP and should be addressed to ensure that this does not happen in the future.

Some programme providers failed to understand that the nature of the National Programmes is a market correcting intervention and therefore central funding was perceived by central government as a pump-priming measure. This raised concerns that the revised funding will mean some of the National Programmes will need to change or raise user-fees. This is increasingly relevant in the context of programmes being sustainable.

The various National Programmes were delivered in very different ways. Local Authorities were allowed a menu of alternative provision to allow some element of choice about the improvement support available to meet their needs (see Section 4.2).

Conclusions and key findings

Overall the key findings from this evaluation of national programmes suggests the programmes have had a positive influence and impact on authorities at both an individual and organisational level. Impacts were most pronounced in terms of new skills and increased confidence, the acquisition of new skills tended to be related to generic management and project management competencies. Generally local authorities reported progress on corporate capacity with substantial investment over recent years in strengthening corporate processes and systems, however organisational development was less pronounced than individual development.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

The report is one of a series of outputs from the national evaluation of the CBP, being undertaken by a team of researchers at the Policy Research Institute (PRI) at Leeds Metropolitan University and the Cities Research Unit at the University of West of England.

1.2 The Capacity Building Programme for Local Government

The Capacity Building Programme for local government was launched in 2003 as a joint Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) / Local Government Association (LGA) initiative to support capacity building and improvement activities within local authorities in England. The CBP has supported four main streams of improvement and capacity building activity in local authorities:

- **Pilot Projects**: the CBP supported a large number of pilot projects which were to "trial innovative ways of working and 'pave the way' for other authorities".
- **National Programmes**: the CBP initially focused on the establishment or expansion of several National Programmes, delivered both by central bodies (such as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Employers Organisation for Local Government (EO), the 4Ps and framework contractors, delivering training and other organisational development support to local authorities.
- **Improvement Partnerships**: Since 2004, the CBP has also channelled financial resources through 'Improvement Partnerships'; groups of local authorities (including Fire and Rescue Authorities and National Parks Authorities) established on a regional, sub-regional or County-wide basis to undertake collective improvement activity.
- **Direct Support**: the CBP has also provided Direct Support to authorities defined as either 'poor' or 'weak' through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process.

1.3 The national evaluation

The evaluation of the Capacity Building Programme has been underway since late 2004. A scoping phase was conducted until May 2005, including a short evaluation of the Pilot Programmes. The main phase of the evaluation commenced in September 2005 and has four main components:

- **Improvement Partnerships** – Qualitative research, including interviews and focus groups and a documentary review are being undertaken in seven case study Improvement Partnerships. The fieldwork is being carried out in two trenches. The first, baseline stage, was undertaken between September 2005 and December 2005. A report summarising the results of this was completed in January 2006. The second phase of the Improvement Partnership fieldwork is due to take place in the same period in 2006. The aim is to compare progress over-time in each of the case studies, to produce evidence of what approaches are currently being deployed in the Partnerships and which are having positive benefits, and why.

- **National Programmes** – This involves undertaking qualitative research (again including interviews, focus groups and documentary analysis) in eighteen case study local authorities. The research focuses on a series of different levels within the case study authorities. Sixteen of the case studies were chosen for maximum participation in the National Programmes. In these, the emphasis is on the impact of participation on the individuals concerned and the translation of this to organisational change, including what facilitated and blocked this transition. A further two case studies have been chosen for non-participation in the National Programmes, to assess the reasons for not participating and the alternative types of improvement and capacity building activity that might be underway. Case study work in local authorities is supplemented by consultation with the National Programme Providers and examination of the evaluative and management information collected by them. This work is currently underway and will be completed by October 2006.

- **Direct Support** – A number of research activities consider the role and impact of Direct Support on local authorities. A report on emerging findings from this work has been completed and submitted to the DCLG.

- **Stakeholder Consultation** – A number of qualitative interviews with stakeholders are planned. This work is to assess the impact of the CBP at a sectoral level, following the multi-levelled analytical model developed in the scoping phase of the research. This work is due to take place between September and December 2006.

2 Methodology for the National Programmes Evaluation

2.1   Evaluation challenges, levels of analysis and attribution

The evaluation methodology for the National Programmes was multi-levelled as the Evaluation Framework set out in Section 2.6 describes. This is because the evaluation sought to pursue a Theory of Change approach and the Capacity Building Programme has a number of different Theories of Change in operation covering the CBP as a whole on the one hand and each National Programme on the other. Further details are provided in Section 3.4 on the evolving and multiple Theories of Change. However, because of this it was necessary to develop a multi-levelled framework that could accommodate these different Theories of Change.

A further problem was encountered in relation to charting the organisational benefits of individual level capacity building interventions. This is a noted problem in evaluating training courses (UKES, 2004), with traditional training evaluation taking the form of 'happy sheet' completion by beneficiaries and being on the 'Kirkpatrick' (1998) scale of evaluation methods. However, because these largely take place at the point of training, they do not provide adequate opportunity for beneficiaries to return to their workplace, implement their new skills or changed behaviour or utilise their new knowledge. Moreover, the evaluation team were keen to assess the cumulative effect of participation in different elements of the Capacity Building Programme such as participation in multiple national programmes or both national programmes and Direct Support. This also involved ascertaining how organisations were attempting to join together the development of perhaps disparate individuals to gain organisational change.

As such, a case study methodology was developed to encourage maximum participation. Individual respondents were allowed to develop their own narrative in terms of causality and structured topic guides were used to attempt to isolate this through self-attribution. Triangulation was achieved by a number of methods. Firstly, structured interviews were held not just with beneficiaries but also with their line managers and respondents were able to give a corporate view, across the local authority. In addition, documentary sources such as organisational training and staff or organisational development plans and the Corporate Performance Assessments which form part of the Comprehensive Performance

Assessment process were reviewed to gain supplementary evidence of organisational change.

Whilst mostly successful, this approach did create further problems. The necessity of ensuring that time had passed since participation meant that some beneficiaries were difficult to trace and in some instances simply could not remember their engagement or participation on the programme in question. For others, the time lapse meant that attribution was even more difficult with multiple other causal variables acting over time. The lesson therefore is that successful evaluation of the organisational impacts of individual training requires individual and organisational level longitudinal monitoring at stages, both prior to and after participation. The problem with this obviously, is the relative cost of the process, especially when it is external to the training provider and where data access is more time consuming and difficult.

2.2 Key Research Questions

At the outset of the main phase of the evaluation, the following key research questions were set by the client:

9. Is the programme comprehensive in meeting demand for capacity building from local authorities?
10. How is the national programme being delivered?
11. To what extent is the national programme meeting its objectives?
12. What is the added value of the national programme?
13. How are the various elements of the national programme working in isolation and together as well as with the local and regional work that has been commissioned?
14. What is the impact of the national programme on the sector, networks of authorities, individual authorities and on individuals who take part in its initiatives?
15. Is the national programme cost effective and does it offer value for money?
16. How the CBP promotes equality and diversity; the shared priorities, efficiency and sustainability?

Throughout, the evaluation work concerned with the National Programmes has sought to answer these questions and they form the basis for the conclusion (see Section 4 – Key Findings). These overall research questions were underpinned by the expectation of specific impacts which were revealed during structured interviews with central government respondents responsible for managing the overall CBP. These are set out in Table 2.

2.3   Provider Consultation

Structured interviews were undertaken with representatives of each of the National Programmes providers. In most cases, respondents were interviewed several times to ensure that progress in the development of the National Programmes was charted and any emerging issues were explored. The interviews followed a tailored Topic Guide and explored developing issues in the provision of support, process aspects of the evaluation and perceptions of impact and changing capacity needs, as well as how well different elements of the national programme were working together.

Interviews with providers were also used as a means of collecting information about participation in the projects and any evaluation that was undertaken. While providers were asked at multiple points during the evaluation to provide data on take-up and evaluation, this information was somewhat difficult to obtain and where available it was often in formats which made comparison between programmes very problematic.

2.4   Case Study Fieldwork

Case Study Fieldwork included a number of different components:

- **Elected leadership** – single or group interviews with elected members who may or may not have participated in CBP programmes. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain views of the capacity needs of case study local authorities and how these were arrived at, whether the CBP currently meets these needs, their experience of engagement with the CBP and the impact of this.
- **Senior management/leadership** - single or group interviews with senior manager/s (director level) who may or may not have participated in CBP programmes. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain views of the capacity needs of local authorities and how these were arrived at, whether the CBP met these needs, their experience of engagement with the CBP and any views on impact. These interviews also collected information about the range of other capacity building activities underway within the authority.
- **Sponsoring line managers** – in some cases we were able to interview the line managers of individual participants or beneficiaries of CBP National Programmes. The purpose of this was to triangulate reported findings from individual beneficiaries. The purpose was also to gain a better understanding of the authorities decision to participate and, where relevant, to put specific staff forward.

- **Individual Beneficiaries** – who had participated directly in National Programmes. This involved individual or group interviews with beneficiaries of specific programmes. The aim was to collect information on the reasons behind participation, how these were mapped to a perceived need, the experience of participating and any impacts of this. Where possible these interviews were undertaken in groups to encourage and promote good practice by shared learning among the group. Individuals in the group were, for instance, to identify how their engagement with the CBP had led them and others around them to change their workplace practices and develop organisational practice. Where individuals could highlight such impact they were asked to share their experiences and others were encouraged to think about how they may achieve similar spill-over.
- **Documentary review** – of CPA assessments (with specific attention given to the Corporate Assessment), Community Strategies, Corporate Plans, organisational development and staff training plans. This documentation was used to gain an insight into the capacity challenges facing the authority, how these were being addressed through the planning cycle and the progress made in terms of building the capacity of the authority over time. It was thus part of the effort to contextualise the findings regarding participation in the National Programmes and to understand the relative contribution made by them. This documentary review was also useful in attempting to triangulate any reported findings from respondents.

Each category of interview was undertaken against a tailored and structured Topic Guide agreed with the client steering group. The questions in the Topic Guides were derived from and mapped against the key research questions set by the client at the outset of the evaluation.

2.5 Case Study Selection

National Programme Case Studies were selected to satisfy maximum variation across two main and a number of subsidiary criterion:

- **Maximum Participation** – 16 case study authorities to include participation in as many National Programmes as possible, including coverage of all National Programmes with participating authorities at September 2005. Within this group, efforts were made to ensure maximum variation by:
  - *Type of authority* – County, Districts, City Unitaries and Metropolitan Unitaries.
  - *Regional coverage*.
  - *Performance category* – to include representation of the four main performance bands of the CPA that were in use at that time.
- **No Participation** – 2 case studies to investigate the reasons behind decisions not to participate.

2.6   Evaluation Framework

The final overall theory of change for the evaluation was established through discussions with key stakeholders in the DCLG. This is set out in Table 1.

During the scoping phase of the evaluation, a comprehensive literature review on capacity building was undertaken. Among other things this review suggested that the evaluation framework would need to be multi-levelled, to take account of interventions at individual, organizational and sectoral level. The literature review also highlighted the need to identify the extent to which the impact at each level had been translated to others. Most notably, the concern was to identify how individual level interventions (participation on training and development courses) had been translated to achieve organizational change. As such, the evaluation framework also attempted to identify the mechanisms by which this was facilitated and the factors that acted as a barrier to this.

Table 1: Overall logic for National Programmes			
Policy Logic	**Mechanism**	**Outputs**	**Intended Impacts**
Need to provide capacity building support to local authorities to overcome relevant market failures and implement 2001 White Paper and LGMA.	Establishment of "…national framework of capacity building programmes which are focussed on developing the corporate capacity of councils"	Establishment of National Programmes in each of capacity building areas mapped out in initial research	• Development of new skills • Increased confidence • Increased job satisfaction • Better business planning and target setting • Promotion of equality and diversity • Improved recruitment and retention • Improved project and programme management • Better performance management • Improved learning, more innovation and sharing of good practice • Service improvements

Table 2 and Table 3 establish how the different levels of the evaluation framework were integrated with the different theories of change that operated at an overall programme level and those that operated at the level of specific National Programmes. Table 2 sets out the impacts expected by central government across the National Programmes as a whole. Table 3 shows how these fit with the specific aims and objectives expected by from each National Programme. These tables also establish the source of evidence drawn upon to assess the achievement of these impacts.

Table 2: Generic impacts expected by central government from the CBP			
Generic Impact Expected	**Level expected at…**	**Type of evidence**	**Source of evidence**
Development of new skills	Individual	Qualifications achieved/ courses completed	Provider data
		Respondents reporting skills learned & applied in workplace	LA case studies: HL, PART and LL.
Increased confidence	Individual	Respondents reporting increased confidence	LA case studies: HL, PART and LL and provider data.
Increased job satisfaction	Individual	Respondents reporting increased job satisfaction	LA case studies: HL, PART and LL and provider data.
Better business planning and target setting	Team/Authority	Respondents identifying changed business planning and target setting.	LA case studies: HL, PART.
		Documentary	CPA report, improvement plan, corporate plan
Promotion of equality and diversity	Team/Authority	Respondents reporting increased diversity and equality	LA case studies: HL, PART.
		Documentary	Relevant BVPIs
Improved recruitment and retention	Team/Authority	Respondents reporting that recruitment and retention difficulties have eased	LA case studies: HL, PART.
		Sector level data on recruitment and retention	Published data, as available
Improved project and programme management	Individual /Team/Authority	Respondents reporting changed and improved project and programme management.	LA case studies: HL, PART and LL.
		Qualifications/courses completed on project management (e.g. Prince 2).	Provider Data LA case studies: HL, PART
		Documentary	CPA report, improvement plan, corporate plan
Better performance management	Team/Authority	Changed and improved performance management practices	LA case studies: HL, PART
		Documentary	CPA report, improvement plan, corporate plan
Improved learning, more innovation and sharing of good practice	Individual /Team/Authority	Respondents reporting improved learning, innovation and sharing of good practice.	LA case studies: HL, PART and LL.
Service improvements	Team/Authority	Respondents	LA case studies: HL, PART and LL.
		Documentary	CPA report, improvement plan, corporate plan

Key: HL – High level interviews with Senior Officers/Elected Members, PART – Focus groups and interviews with participants, LL – Interviews with NGDP participants.

Table 3: Specific expected impacts from each of the National Programmes					
Programme	**Aims**	**Link to Generic Impacts**	**Level expected at…**	**Type of evidence**	**Source of evidence**
IDeA's Advanced Leadership Programme	To provide targeted and effective development opportunities, ensuring a future for local government led by managers who will be able to: - Address continuous change - Lead and develop complex organizations. - Deliver a diverse range of effective and responsive services. - Work across internal and external boundaries. - Support the continued relevance of local democracy.	Increased skills, confidence and leadership capacity	Individual Team/Dept/ Authority	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports
				Respondents	HL, Part
IDeA's Leadership Academy	Develop participants' leadership style, give them confidence and create a support network among peers in other councils and parties.	Increased skills, confidence and leadership capacity	Individual Team/Dept/ Authority		
				Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports
				Respondents	HL, Part
IDeA's Peer Support 1 & 2 and Leadership Determination (i.e. Officer and Member Peers in the Peer Clearing House)	To improve local government peers and to facilitate the exchange of peers through recruitment, accreditation, placement and development of peers.	Increased skills, confidence and leadership capacity	Individual Team/Dept/ Authority	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports
				Respondents	HL, Part

Table 3: Specific expected impacts from each of the National Programmes					
Roffey Park's Improving Corporate Performance	Provides a package of support to assist councils improve their project and programme management skills. Focuses on 'skilling-up' individual project managers and strengthening the leadership role of project sponsors and organisational systems that support project management.	Increased skills, confidence and job satisfaction among participants, increased project management capacity	Individual Team/Dept/ Authority	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports
				Respondents	HL, Part
4Ps' Gateways	To assure the delivery of better quality procurement projects in local government through: - Ensuring that projects progress successfully to the next stage of development. - Better scoping of projects. - Faster delivery of benefits. - Appropriate structure of contracts. - Better VfM. - Enhanced capacity within the sector to undertake procurement and gateway reviews.	Increased skills, confidence and job satisfaction among participants, improved (quicker) procurement projects, improved capacity for procurement and project support in the sector	Individual Team/Dept/ Authority	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports
				Respondents	HL, Part

Table 3: Specific expected impacts from each of the National Programmes					
4Ps Procurement Skills Training	To transform local authorities capacity in strategic procurement, in support of the National Procurement strategy by: - Delivering high quality training. - designing a course to enhance members' and senior managers' leadership skills in strategic procurement and partnering. - rolling out members and senior managers training, giving all local authorities the opportunity to participate. - training project teams in key skills necessary for the successful delivery of major procurement and the management of strategic partnerships. - organising the delivery of focused training designed to address the critical skills gap of individual team members. - creating and maintaining a pool of suitable deliverers - targeting poor and weak authorities. - creating and maintaining a knowledge management system.	Increased skills, confidence and job satisfaction among participants, improved (quicker) procurement projects, improved capacity for procurement	Individual Team/Dept/ Authority	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports
				Respondents	HL, Part
EO's Public Protection – Environmental Health and Trading Standards	To help to address major recruitment issues affecting environmental health officers and trading standards in local government.	Reduced recruitment and retention difficulties in EH and TS services.	Team/Authority	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports, other reports – e.g. Corporate plan etc
				Respondents	HL, Part

Table 3: Specific expected impacts from each of the National Programmes					
EO's National Graduate Development Programme	To: - provide local government with its own national graduate development programme. - enable the sector to compete with other major public and private sector employers for the best graduates. - raise the general profile of local government as an employer of choice. - provide the sector with a cost effective way of growing and nurturing its own management and leadership talent. - provide an injection of fresh talent into the sector. - ensure that the programme meets the needs of the sector.	Increased use of NGDP, increased profile of NGDP, reduced recruitment and retention difficulties in Las, increased capacity and employability of NGDP graduates.	Individual/Team/Authorities	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports, other reports – e.g. Corporate plan etc
				Respondents	HL, Part, LL
EO's Accelerated Development Programme	To: Create, develop, deliver and roll-out a regionally delivered national programme of skills development for people with 2 years of work experience in local government.	Increase Increased skills, confidence and job satisfaction among participants, reduce recruitment and retention difficulties in Las.	Individual/Team/Authorities	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports, other reports – e.g. Corporate plan etc
				Respondents	HL, Part
EO's Diversity in Districts	To enable small authorities to reach level one or two of the local government equality standard.	Authorities reaching level one or two in Equality standard, improved equality and diversity in organisation	Team/authorities	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports, other reports – e.g. Corporate plan etc, BVPIs etc.
				Respondents	HL, Part

Table 3: Specific expected impacts from each of the National Programmes					
EO's High Performance People Management (LEAP bit)	To: - develop and deliver a national development programme for HR managers. - develop a performance improvement framework for HR managers, services and people management standards. - enhance the advisory support services available to authorities on strategic HR issues.	Increase Increased skills, confidence and job satisfaction among participants, Improved strategic HR capacity (alignment of HR and OD, HR priorities and vision).	Individual/Team/ Authorities	Provider data	Providers
				Documentary	CPA reports, other reports – e.g. Corporate plan etc.
				Respondents	HL, Part
EO's Workforce Remodelling	To support the Pay and Workforce Strategy by: - developing guidance and good practice database based on existing activities in local government and the wider public sector, including a generic web-based remodelling toolkit. - providing on-going support for remodelling of jobs across local government. - demonstrating the advantages of remodelling in tackling skills shortages, developing staff potential and allowing key staff to focus skills on key duties.	Examples of workforce remodelling in authorities	Team/authorities	Provider data	Providers
				Respondents	Separate phone interviews with defined contacts
EO's Skills Pathways	To create a National skills pathways framework that can be applied across the sector.	Establishment of a national skills framework and its use by Las in their own competency frameworks, reduced recruitment and retention difficulties in authorities.	Teams/authorities	Provider Data	Providers
				Respondents	HL, Part
				Documentary	CPA reports, other reports – e.g. Corporate plan etc.

Table 3: Specific expected impacts from each of the National Programmes					
PWC's Performance Improvement and Management	Performance improvement: Solving real problems in real time during the programme Building a team of performance champions who can make change happen Focusing on changing behaviour and culture rather than systems and technical processes Strengthening regional improvement networks.	Increased skills, confidence and job satisfaction among participants, Increased leadership capacity, improved project and programme management.	Individuals/Teams/ Authorities	Provider Data	Providers
				Respondents	HL, Part
				Documentary	CPA reports, other reports – e.g. Corporate plan etc.
Deloitte's Future Leadership Programme	To: - Develop middle managers capacity - Develop organizational capacity at middle management level	Increased skills, confidence and job satisfaction among participants, improved middle-management capacity, improved project management.	Individuals/Teams/ Authorities	Provider Data	Providers
				Respondents	HL, Part
				Documentary	CPA reports, other reports – e.g. Corporate plan etc.

3 Development and management of the National Programmes

3.1   Evolution of the National Programmes

A key theme of the 2001 local government White Paper Strong *Local Leadership, Quality Public Services* (DTLR, 2001a) was strengthening the capacity of local councils in order to deliver the local government modernisation agenda. In particular, the White Paper singled out corporate capacity and the skills of both officers and elected members as key capacity building needs for local authorities. In response to this commitment the 2002 Spending Review set aside £135m for capacity building in local authorities over three years (Treasury, 2002:80). This funding has in practice been a complicated mix of contributions from the Local Government Association's 'top slice' of the revenue support grant and direct Treasury funding, through the ODPM, resulting a joint fund management arrangement between the LGA and ODPM.

A year after the Spending Review – 2003 - the Capacity Building Programme was born. However, the period of its gestation had witnessed considerable institutional change in central government. The former Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions was disbanded, with Transport becoming a new independent department. Responsibility for planning, housing, local government and regional policy remained together and was placed in the remit of the newly created Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Subsequently the institutional arrangements for managing central government responsibility for local government within ODPM went through several rounds of changes and the team responsible for managing the CBP witnessed frequent changes of staffing, so much so that the entire team was replaced within a 12 month period.

The National Programmes, therefore, developed in the context of the need to deliver the CBP quickly. As such, the initial structure of the National Programmes changed several times in the early development of the CBP and was reliant on subsidising access to existing programmes of support available to local authorities, largely through the IDeA. The effect of this can be seen in the subsequent revisions of CBP marketing material. For instance, the initial prospectus (ODPM, 2003a) released in June of 2003 highlighted seven themes of support that were available through the CBP:

- **Peer Support** – with some of the costs of the IDeA's Peer Clearing House met by the CBP and subsidies available for accessing peer support through the Peer Clearing House.

- **Support for Improvement Planning** – with subsidies available for Poor and Weak authorities to access consultancy, primarily from the IDeA but also, where this is requested, from other consultancies.
- **Leadership and Change Management** – through funding the expansion of the IDeA's existing Leadership Academy for elected members and Advanced Leadership Programme, for senior officers.
- **Recruitment and Retention** – through expanding the existing National Graduate Development Programme, operated by the Employer's Organisation and the piloting of the Accelerated Development Programme, also run by the Employer's Organisation.
- **Middle Management Development** – through supporting two Employer's Organisation projects. The first was the National Management Development Programme which aimed to generate a skills pathway detailing progression from specialist expertise to generic management competencies. The second was the High Performance People Management programme which intended to improve strategic human resources functions in local authorities.
- **Making the Best Use of Scarce Skills** – through supporting the Centre for Public Scrutiny, the sharing of knowledge between the Regional Centres of (procurement) Excellence, Procurement Skills Training and Gateway Reviews programmes, run by the 4Ps and several programmes run by the EO, including Workforce Remodelling and Skills Pathways.
- **Support for District Councils** – with special terms of access and subsidy available for access to the Peer Clearing House and other IDeA consultancy support.

The following year a joint ODPM and LGA publication *The Capacity Building Programme – the Facts* (ODPM and LGA, 2004) described the CBP as structured around four different themes of improvement support, with the National Programmes being one of these. By now, the seven themes of improvement activity had been abandoned and the National Programmes mentioned were differentiated between those that were new, commissioned through the Framework Contract, and those that were existing. The new programmes in development were at that time, a Middle Management Development Programme (which later became the Future Leadership Programme) and Councillor Mentoring programme, to be available through the IDeA and the Peer Clearing House. The existing programmes mentioned were:

- EO's Regional Capacity and Skills advisers,
- the Peer Clearing House;
- the Advanced Leadership Programme;
- the Leadership Academy;
- IDeA improvement consultancy services;
- the National Graduate Development Programme,
- Gateway Reviews; and
- Procurement Skills Training.

A further year later, *The Capacity Building Programme – Update 2005* (ODPM and LGA, 2005) presented the programme as having two main

themes of activity; those available through direct funding (such as the establishment of improvement partnerships or direct support to poor and weak authorities) and that available through participation on the National Programmes. This time the Leadership Centre for Local Government was listed under National Programmes along with the Academy for Sustainable Communities, the IDeA's Modern Members programme and the Faculty of Local Government Managers. By now, several new national programmes had also been commissioned through the Framework contract, including Councillor Mentoring, the Future Leadership Programme and Project and Programme Management.

3.2 Proposals for future changes to the management of the National programmes

There are a number of proposed changes to the structure of management and funding to the National Programmes. The most important proposed changes are:

- That the management responsibility for the National Programmes would be transferred to the IDeA. This is intended to offer greater management capacity to the National Programmes overall, improve marketing and promotional activity and allow the National Programme providers access to the deeper networks maintained by the IDeA.
- That the responsibility for funding available for subsidy payments to incentivise participation on the National Programmes be transferred to Improvement Partnerships.

3.3 Theories of change

The evaluation sort to use a theory of change analysis, however, this was complicated by a number of factors which included the multiple levels at which the Capacity Building Programme operates, the nature of the local government sector and the changing configuration of the CBP.

The multi-levelled structure of the CBP means that different, potentially conflicting, theories of change have been in operation at the same time. Overall it is difficult to identify a clear and consistent statement of precisely what the CBP sought to achieve. The overall logic for the CBP appears to have been three-fold. First was a concern to implement the modernisation agenda, with a specific focus on the reforms introduced through the 2001 White Paper on local government. Secondly, there was an assumption that local authorities lacked the capacity to deliver these reforms. The third, was a corresponding assumption that the market for improvement support for local authorities to develop this capacity was failing in a number of respects:

- Supply-side failures – that there was insufficient supply of improvement support tailored to the specific needs of local authorities, especially in regard to the weaknesses identified in the White Paper.

- Demand-side failures – that local authorities lacked the capacity and resources, in some cases to identify their own weaknesses, and in others to gain access to the support that was available and to any that might be developed in the future.
- Information failures – that suppliers lacked knowledge and information of what the weaknesses and needs of the sector were and that local authorities lacked awareness and knowledge of what support was available and how to access this. Informational failures also related to the capacity of local authorities to learn from one another and to share knowledge and best practice.

The 2001 White Paper was quite clear in the intention to develop a package of support for councils which would help them to build capacity to deliver the reforms set out in the same document, in particular:

"The Government is determined to ensure that councils, members and officers all have the support they need to build their capacity to deliver strong and confident community leadership and high quality public services. In particular there is a need to build up capacity and skills in:

- *strategic leadership;*
- *effective overview and scrutiny; and*
- *partnership working, performance management, project management, new technologies and commissioning and procurement."*

The White Paper also began to elaborate on a set of assumptions about how this could be achieved, highlighting the rationalisation of existing funding streams, more effective tailoring of improvement support to the specific needs of individual local authorities, making the best use of those skills that are available and encouraging the sharing of knowledge and 'know how' within the local government sector and beyond, so that councils could learn about good practice elsewhere. By the time the prospectus, the approach was focused on shared learning from peers, supporting improvement planning, supporting leaders (elected members and officers) to lead change, helping to address recruitment and retention, developing middle managers project and programme management skills and getting the best out of available skills. These themes provided something of a framework for the aims of the programme and how these were to be achieved, and operated not just across the National Programmes, but through the initial Pilot projects and Direct Support also. However, as the CBP developed, these themes of activity disappeared, with the emphasis moving simply to the means by which support was available to local authorities, such as through the National Programmes, Direct Support, Pilot Programmes and then the Improvement Partnerships. This latter shift toward Improvement Partnerships introduced an entirely new theory of change with the aim being to help to further align and streamline the capacity building support available to local authorities and to match this with an increasing commitment to devolution of responsibility, peer working, sharing of knowledge and self regulation within the sector.

This evolution in thinking has created two types of complexity for the evaluation. The first is related to the changing theories of change in operation, which present the evaluation with the problem of choosing which one to use in judging the progress and impact of the CBP. This has been overcome through work with the DCLG to identify more specific outcomes that they hoped to achieve across the National Programmes. Each of these applied differently at different levels. For example, some operated at an individual level and others operated at a team/departmental level and others across the whole organisation.

It was also complicated because each National Programme adopted its own set of aims and objectives and operated under its own assumptions about what inputs and processes were needed to achieve these. While these were sometimes different from those espoused directly through the overall management of the CBP, they were not directly contradictory, and as such, it has been possible to develop a multi-tiered approach to the theories of change that are in operation to allow all these different approaches to be accommodated.

In addition to this, each participating authority and each participating individual also had their own ideas about what they wanted to achieve and how they thought participation in a national programme(s) would help them achieve this, either in terms of individual or organisational change. At an organisational level, the overwhelming reason for participating on a national programme was a perceived linkage with a weakness identified through the CPA process. At an individual level, motivations varied. Some individuals had clearly been nominated to fill a perceived skills gap in the organisation, but in other cases the logic for individual participation was much weaker and more opaque. Wherever possible, the evaluation has sought to identify these and to link them to the generic and specific aims of the programme as set out in the Evaluation Framework set out in Section 2.6.

3.4   Management of the National Programmes

The management of the CBP has suffered from a lack of continuity of key staff. There is evidence from the fieldwork that the clarity of the information and procedures for accessing support through the CBP has suffered because of this. The management of the National Programmes is a good example of this in a number of respects. For instance, no clear mechanism for monitoring the progress of the different National Programmes has been established. Many of the programme providers reported that central government representatives on their governance structures lost interest in the programme once it had been commissioned.

Programme providers were also confused by the changing emphasis of the CBP, with some having established their programmes to fit with the initial logic and then being frustrated as the CBP moved on and they were left with what appeared to be a 'legacy' programme. For example, some providers reported that the governance arrangements for their programme quite

quickly failed with DCLG unable to attend programme management meetings. Further, providers complained that they were not given appropriate guidance on required performance monitoring and reporting. This led to a variety of procedures on the part of providers. Clearly, this undermined the capacity of central government to manage the National Programmes effectively. A clear point of learning for the CBP is the necessity of establishing appropriate and streamlined governance and performance management procedures to ensure that this does not happen in the future.

Providers also reported some concerns at changes in financial mechanisms and local authorities in places reported difficulties in understanding the financial processes for delivering subsidy payments. Frequently, these processes have been complicated by the regulatory environment which makes it difficult for the DCLG to pass money and support to local authorities. This is clearly an area that needs addressing in the future, and proposed changes to the nature of funding for the next phase of the CBP appear to have overcome these problems.

A further point of confusion and tension regards the overall nature of the National Programmes as a market correcting intervention. Some programme providers did not understand the intention that central funding was perceived by central government as a pump-priming measure. There are thus concerns that the revised funding and subsidy model will mean that some of the National Programmes will need to charge or raise user-fees. In turn there is concern that the market will not bear these costs and that this will mean that they are unsustainable in their present form. Related to this, some providers are not clear about the ownership of intellectual property that is embedded in programme content and models of delivery. This will be especially relevant in the context of programmes becoming unsustainable. It is clearly not desirable that otherwise beneficial material is lost, but thought needs to be given to how this can best be exploited.

4 Key Findings

4.1 Fit between National Programmes and Demand for Capacity Building

Key Research Question: *Are the national programmes comprehensive in meeting demand for capacity building from local authorities?*

4.1.1 Fit between National Programmes and need at the outset of the CBP

At a superficial level, the fit between the capacity building needs reported by local authorities in the course of the work and the coverage of the national programme is good. The coverage of the National Programmes broadly fits with the needs of the sector as identified by research commissioned at the outset of the programme (OPM, 2003) which defined capacity as:

> *"… the right organisation, systems, partnerships, people and processes to deliver against a particular agenda or plan." (OPM, 2003:7).*

This definition was then placed in a vertically differentiated model and where capacity could be understood at a whole sector, strategic/organisational, operational management and service delivery level (Ibid: 8-9). Capacity building was then differentiated between measures to develop institutional, organisational and individual capacity. The first of these, *institutional capacity*, was defined as building capacity to engage in external linkages, to maintain relationships and to engage in effective partnership working. The second – *organisational* – component was defined as not just the aggregate of individual competencies within the organisation but "how well the organisation structures and uses its human resources, and by its systems, processes and culture" (9).

In analysing the context for capacity building, the OPM research highlighted a range of broad issues. On the demand-side they identified the implementation the modernisation agenda as a specific driver of demand. Authorities lacked the time and resources to implement multiple initiatives effectively. This was a specific concern for smaller District Councils lacking corporate capacity. Partnership working with other agencies, where the investment-benefit horizons are often long-term, was also raised as a specific capacity challenge arising from the modernisation agenda. Finally, inspection reports were identified as providing the role of highlighting problems to elected members and senior management or providing the impetus for change in the case of known problems. However, OPM also noted authorities' concerns at the ambiguity of inspection bodies' role, particularly in the case of critical inspections where the Audit Commission will also offer support for improvement (10-11).

An additional capacity challenge was recruitment and retention. Specific recruitment and retention problems were identified as arising out of the

competitive effects of CPA with authorities vying to attract a limited pool of talented managers. This was compounded by competition with the private sector and expanding national and other public sector employers, tight labour markets and the perceived negative image of local government as a career option (12).

OPM identified specific sector-wide gaps, including skills, knowledge, implementing e-government, risk taking and community engagement. Skills gaps were listed as generic leadership competencies such as coalition and consensus building, communicating, consulting, managing change, delegating and negotiating. Knowledge gaps were identified around partnership working and models, policy and funding developments and the use of performance management. Community engagement gaps were identified as related to the need to support grass-roots development, needs analysis, using informal power networks and the ability to manage conflict and tension (13-15).

Capacity gaps at organisational level were highlighted at strategic management level as consistency, managing change and prioritisation. At operational (middle management) level gaps were related to sharing practice, performance management, challenging existing models of service delivery and project management skills. Difficulties in specific support functions were acknowledged in procurement, IT, HR and asset management functions. Finally, capacity gaps in political leadership and accountability were also identified in the role of elected members in the new constitutional structures, prioritisation of resources and decision making and recognising the need for change. The problems associated with split responsibilities between conducting council business and representing constituents was also recognised as a continuing difficulty (19-22).

While barriers to capacity building largely repeated those issues identified as gaps, embedded cultures and resistance to change were also acknowledged, offering support to the ideas about informal institutional persistence. Finally, OPM surveyed authorities about their perceived capacity needs. A list of options were supported by authorities such as increased peer support, funding, sharing best practice and toolkits, developing staff and management skills (37).

The fieldwork for this evaluation also covered local authorities' capacity building needs. These discussions suggested that the multi-tiered analysis of capacity building needs in local government used by the OPM continues to be relevant. For instance fieldwork with respondents in local authorities and consideration of relevant literature[1], suggested that local authorities continue to have capacity gaps in relation to managing their external relationships.

The precise nature and extent of these gaps varied but some common themes did emerge. For instance, several case studies lacked capacity to engage in as wide a range of partnerships and networks as they would have

1 such as corporate plans, organisational development strategies and CPA reports.

liked, or they lacked the capacity to lead debate and strategic direction through these.

The reasons for this were again varied. In some places there were concerns about the confidence and capability of elected members to maintain a strategic focus. For instance, one senior officer commented:

"our members find themselves in partnership settings… they are amongst 20 or 30 … they need to develop the skills and confidence to carry out this role effectively. This has consequences for capacity within the organisations … how officers can support members … there is discomfort and anxiety where we are not in control of situations … we need to develop communication skills and leadership styles" (Senior Officer, County Council in the North of England).

This was especially problematic in the context of a change in political leadership, particularly where this results in a lot of first time councillors and executive members.

In others, especially smaller District Councils, a reported lack of available officer time to attend external meetings and effectively manage external relationships was cited. This presented a problem at both senior and middle manager level. Internally, case study authorities also lacked capacity at senior and middle management levels. At these levels, 'leadership' was widely cited as a weakness, though it was often difficult to determine exactly what was meant by this. For instance, in one case study authority a weakness in 'leadership' was diagnosed by the IDeA and clear definition given to it as the absence of a clear statement of corporate priorities and strategic direction. In other cases, however, this was present but respondents still mentioned weaknesses in leadership as a capacity building need.

To some extent these more ambiguous definitions appeared to be related to the possession of generic management skills, and in particular programme and project management techniques and processes among middle managers associated with service specific expertise and was thus related to a more general perceived trend toward more general management rather than technical experts rising through a service-specific organisational structure to hold a management position. Interestingly, though, some NGDP graduates suggested that this perception was not necessarily accurate as they felt their job search options were narrowed by the fact that so many local authorities wanted recruits with service-related technical expertise rather than generic managers.

In other places the definition of leadership seemed to be more related to general levels of awareness and commitment to corporate agendas. For instance, in one authority this was used to mean that middle managers of services needed to be aligning their activities and behaviours with corporate priorities rather than seeing them as defined by service specific needs. As such, capacity building in leadership, in this sense, was seen as a next step from agreeing a clear statement of priorities and strategic direction, and

defined by embedding these in the organisation by a process of aligning resource allocation and individual behaviour with them.

In other cases, leadership was referred to in terms of 'decentralised' leadership. In the same vein, others talked of "pushing leadership down through the organisation". Such definitions were not precise or clear, but tended to be couched in a context of needing a wider group of staff to be committed to an agenda and thus taking concerted action in pursuit of shared objectives, while making best use of the widely differing skills and competencies of a wider group or team to achieve this. This correlates with some of the definitions produced in the literature (e.g. Bennet et al., 2003). What is significant is that it transfers the emphasis away from the individual characteristics of individuals, to the collective commitment and culture of a group. Where the characteristics of the individual leader remain important is in relation to 'soft' skills areas such as around communication, influencing and emotional awareness. Certainly, these were skills needs cited by and of middle and senior managers.

Further, discussion in some of the case studies focused around knowledge gaps, such as keeping abreast of policy changes, the relevant regulatory environment or techniques and strategies in implementing these. Examples include procurement and the shared services agenda, planning and building control.

Generally, local authorities reported significant recent progress on corporate capacity with substantial investment over recent years in strengthening corporate processes and systems, largely in response to the demands of CPA. Despite this, some case studies reported continuing needs in terms of Human Resources systems, programme and project management processes, performance management and communication between departments. However, in each of these areas, the needs of case studies varied widely. For instance, some still needed to introduce corporate HR strategies or had not been able yet to fully align resources with organisational priorities.

In others, these systems were in place but they needed to take the next step. For example, one already high performing council was hoping to renew its HR strategy in the context of moving to a much greater reliance on staff working from home so that premises could be released either for efficiency savings or for more appropriate front-line use. This was seen as important in terms of addressing future recruitment and retention problems as well as addressing the demands of area-based and neighbourhood management and governance. However, it had major implications for the way that staff are managed, for the IT and other support services that need to be in place. In these two examples the specific types of HR capacity building that were needed are very different and this was the case across business systems.

Recruitment and retention problems continued to be problematic for some case studies. For instance, one case study authority had until recently been struggling with unfilled posts in its senior management team. Respondents in several case studies reported that they viewed continued recruitment and

retention problems in attracting high calibre recruits (with graduates mentioned specifically in at least one case study) as stemming from a perceived unattractive image and reputation of local government. Indeed transforming their image as an employer and becoming more attractive to potential employees was seen as a key capacity building challenge. This is typified by the following statement from a case study authority's Improvement Plan:

> *"an employer of choice which identifies and nurtures talent, applying it intelligently in an organisation with a strong capacity for change" (Council Improvement Plan, Inner London Borough).*

In another, one respondent reported that they had been without a Chief Executive for a period of time, undermining leadership and strategic direction. This was felt compound a lack of stability in strategic direction caused by frequent changes in political control:

> *"There are a wide range of reasons why [the council] is improving at such a slow rate, there has been political volatility in the council and there needs to be stability politically, or through the Chief Executive" (Senior Manager, large Urban Unitary in the South of England).*

Despite suggestions of the importance of distributed leadership, the connections between leadership and recruitment and retention issues was made in a number of case studies, emphasising the importance of the individualistic characteristics of leaders. For instance, one respondent suggested that:

> *"capacity is about resources – these resources are principally the people that do things … it is about leadership and management and the skills sets that people have to lead and to manage" (Senior Officer, Inner London Borough).*

Several case studies also noted the need to embed revised internal business systems within the 'culture' of the organisation. 'Culture', like leadership, was a widely repeated phrase but it was not always clear exactly what was meant by the term. As a lowest common denominator it appeared to refer to widely shared beliefs or values about appropriate workplace behaviour. As such, performance management systems or equality and diversity policies may have been strengthened or corporate priorities more clearly stated, but there were places where respondents felt these hadn't yet become part of these widely shared belief/value systems, meaning that individual staff behaviour might not yet have been revised to take these into account. Where this was the case, there was a clear need to gain more commitment and ownership of the revised processes from a wider group of staff. For instance, in one authority where this was the case, a respondent noted that there had been

> *"a lot of change in the council since the CPA in 2002 with the building blocks to strengthen capacity in place but not yet embedded throughout the council" (Senior Manager, Large Urban Unitary, South of England).*

This approach to organisational culture appears, in this sense, to significantly overlap the definitional discussion of leadership, above. Interestingly, there was very little mention in this regard of relationships with trade unions or with other staff representatives. Strengthening mechanisms for negotiating changes to organisational structures with staff might be one area of organisational capacity building that might help to address the need for culture change.

One continuing capacity building need which was also highlighted by the initial OPM research, was the demands created by shifting central government initiatives. This is often not related to changing policy agendas but changing funding arrangements or institutional structures for accessing support in order to implement these. One implication of the need to generate stable mechanisms for delivering support to local authorities to implement national policy agendas. The Capacity Building Programme is one of these, of course, and the development of Improvement Partnerships offers one mechanism through which central government support for local implementation might be made more stable in the future.

When compared with this analysis of past and current capacity building needs, the National Programmes appear to appropriately cover the demands of local authorities, and there is no obvious gap. However, what was noticeable from the research is that respondents in case study local authorities were often forthright in conveying the specificity of their capacity building need; one authority's need for capacity building in relation to HR, performance management or councillor development is not the same as another's. The extent to which this is true was hard to validate. However, local authorities did suggest that they would be more likely to take-up support where they perceived this to be more tailored to their local circumstances.

4.1.2   Emerging Capacity Building Themes

Generally the increased investment over recent years in internal corporate systems meant that many of the case studies were keen to move on to focus investment on capacity building in ways that are directly related to service delivery or the pursuit of organisational priorities and targets. Though there was no single area which emerged as the main subject of such discussions, respondents in case study authorities did identify the delivery of Local Area Agreements as one area in which capacity building activities would need to be focused in the future.

Other future drivers of capacity building needs were the challenges posed by continuing to respond to changing patterns of demand for public services, with a particular emphasis on 'just-in-time', 24 hour and flexible access to service provision. For instance, one respondent commented abut the need to use information technology to transform service delivery, mimicking changes in private services sectors like insurance:

"At one time you would nip into a high street branch, now you phone up or use the web. This has changed the way that the industry works and who works in it" (Senior Officer, County Council in the North of England).

The potential for future changes of political leadership was also shaping considerations of future capacity building needs, where this was thought to be a possibility.

Future capacity building needs were addressed in discussions with respondents in the case study authorities. These were generally thought to be related to the changing policy and institutional context for local government. For instance, much of the discussion about future needs centred on implementation of what was then the forthcoming White Paper on local government. The long period of trailing the content of the White Paper meant that many respondents discussed the likely impact in terms of capacity building needs with some confidence. However, on some issues the long period of gestation for both the White Paper and the outcomes stemming from the Lyons Inquiry meant that they were subject to considerable uncertainty, particularly in relation to the issue of local government reorganisation in two-tier areas:

"The whole of local government is on tenterhooks. There is this 'spectre' in the background…how the council will move forward depends on the Unitary authority issue…there is a lot of wastage and duplication at the moment" (Senior Officer, County Council in the North of England).

Capacity Building to deliver shared outcomes in partnership with other organisations featured prominently here as did the implications of more area based working. In the latter example, there was discussion of the tensions and challenges this is likely to pose for elected members as well as officers in managing service delivery at this level. Indeed, moving toward increasing focus on community and neighbourhood working also posed questions about the need to reshape organisational structures to better align resources to this level of governance and service delivery.

Other White Paper related future capacity building needs were thought to relate to the increasing prominence of City Regions and the challenges posed by increased partnership working with both local authority neighbours and other organisations at this level. For instance, in one authority where they had already begun to explore the potential to develop shared back-office functions or service delivery respondents noted that as discussions developed further they were likely to highlight capacity building needs in relation to managing change and service re-design. Another found itself at the epicentre of an emerging City region and respondents recognised that this would drive capacity building needs for the authority, though it was less clear what precisely these would be beyond promoting a general enhanced awareness of the city-region agenda and city-regional priorities amongst staff and developing closer working relationships with non-local authority agencies (e.g. Regional Development Agency).

Future capacity building needs were also discussed in the light of current policy, especially in relation to service delivery and performance in social services, in the context of organisational changes as a result of the advent of more joined up children's services. This was thought to pose challenges also as a result of the need to reconfigure and resource adult social care.

4.1.3   Levels of take-up

Levels of take-up varied widely between the different National Programmes. Those with low take-up are predominantly those that never proceeded beyond an initial 'pilot' phase, such as Diversity in Districts, skills pathways and the Accelerated Development Programme. Others with low levels of take-up include the Performance Improvement Programme run by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, though this was the last programme to be commissioned.

Even where take-up is relatively impressive, discussions with programme providers reveal that this was in places viewed as disappointing. The Future Leaders Programme is a case with levels of take-up being insufficient to support the programme in a context of subsidies being removed. The providers had hoped that the depth of take-up by each participating local authorities might have been higher, but even with subsidies for group bookings, it proved difficult to get authorities to subscribe to more than three or four managers attending the programme. In other cases take-up was limited not by a lack of demand but by the capacity in supply. For instance, take-up of the Gateway Review programme was constrained to a certain extent by the availability of willing reviewers able to staff review teams.

Table 4: National Programme Take-up	
Programme	**No of Participating authorities**
Advanced Leadership Programme	79 local authorities (by September 2005).
Leadership Academy	223 local authorities (by November 2006).
Project and Programme Management	22 local authorities (by Spring 2006).
Gateway Reviews	116 local authorities, 197 individual participants (by December 2007).
Procurement Skills training	180 local authorities (by September 2005).
Diversity in Districts	9 pilot local authorities.
Public Protection	110 local authorities.

Table 4: National Programme Take-up	
NGDP	108 local authorities, 391 trainees (by December 2006) CBP funded 45%.
Accelerated Development Programme	48 local authorities.
LEAP Coaching	202 local authorities.
Skills Pathways	18 Local authorities.
Future Leadership Programme	Overall: 191 local authorities and 413 individual participants. Subsidised: 163 local authorities and 274 participants (by November 2006).
Performance Improvement	5 Local Authorities and 4 Fire and Rescue Services in Pilot Phase (by October 2006).
Leadership Centre	90 Local Authorities.

4.1.4   Reasons for participating in National Programmes

There were a wide variety of reasons for participating in the National Programmes, both organisationally on the part of the authorities and individually on the part of individual participants. Reasons varied at organisational and individual levels between participants and between programmes, meaning that it is difficult to identify typical reasons for participation that accurately reflect these.

At an organisational level, reasons for participating in National Programmes ranged from having identified a particular organisational need on the one hand and a specific National Programme that meet that need on the other, to simply allowing an individual to participate on a training course identified by the individual as desirable. Some programmes appeared to be more likely to generate a positive organisational decision to engage with them, such as the Gateway Review and Procurement Skills Training programmes run by the 4Ps. This may be because they were both primarily organisationally-based programmes, unsuited to individual level participation alone and also because of the well known and widespread skills and capacity gaps in relation to procurement at a time when large parts of local authority service delivery are increasingly contracted from external suppliers.

Other programmes that appeared to be more likely to generate organisational decisions to participate in them were those applying to senior level managers and to elected members such as the IDeA Advanced Leadership Programme, Leadership Academy and Councillor Mentoring. Perhaps this is to be expected given the focus on leadership and the

importance of coping with political turmoil in understandings of capacity building needs of local authorities.

Finally, most of the National Programmes were subsidised and respondents suggested that the level of subsidy received had been important in their decision to participate. However, respondents differed in their views of whether the authority would participate again, with some programmes, particularly the Gateway Review Programme which appeared to exceed the expectations of participants.

Individuals tended to explain their own decisions to participate in National Programmes as motivated by career and personal development aspirations. In addition to this, individuals who had participated on some programmes identified the opportunity to network and engage in shared learning with officers or councillors from other local authorities as an important reason for participating.

Table 5: Organisational & Individual Reasons for Participating in National Programmes		
Programme	**Examples of Organisational Motivations Cited**	**Examples of Individual Motivations Cited**
Advanced Leadership Programme	Responding to a strategic audit of training needs. Belief in individual development regardless of organisational impacts.	Personal challenge. Personal and career development. Opportunity for networking and shared learning. Absence of major time commitment.
Leadership Academy	Build capacity of councillors as part of a structured councillor development programme. Help with transition of political leadership.	Personal and career development. Opportunity for networking and shared learning. Support for new councillors in a new role.
Accelerated Development Programme	Fully subsidised cost.	Personal and career development. Balance between academic and work-based content.
LEAP Coaching	Identified need to implement coaching system.	Personal and carer development.

Table 5: Organisational & Individual Reasons for Participating in National Programmes		
National Graduate Development Programme	Need to attract skilled staff. Need to address image of own local authority as an employer. Fully subsidised cost.	Personal and carer development. Opportunity to work in the Public sector / alternative to other public sector graduate recruitment programmes. Opportunity for post-graduate qualification while working.
Diversity in Districts.	n/a	n/a
Skills Pathways	Additional funding to tackle existing work priorities.	n/a
Public Protection	Address skills shortages and recruitment difficulties.	Personal and carer development. Potential for employment at the end of work placements.
Gateway Reviews	Compulsory for some large scale procurement projects. External validation for significant project. Access to peer expertise. Fully subsidised cost.	Desire to 'give back' to a process they had benefited from. Develop own skills.
Future Leadership Academy	Need to develop middle managers after a restructuring. Subsidies, especially full subsidy available through the SOCITM.	Personal and carer development. Improve management and leadership skills. Change in role to more generic management responsibilities from a previous more technical role.

Table 5: Organisational & Individual Reasons for Participating in National Programmes		
Performance Improvement	Recognition of weaknesses in performance management across authority or in specific directorate. Central government 'encouragement'.	n/a
Project an Programme Management	Recognition of weaknesses in Project and Programme management. Central government 'encouragement'.	
Councillor Mentoring	To assist with induction of new councillors.	Own personal development. Strengthen ability to perform (new) role. Opportunity for networking and shared learning.

NB: These reasons were mentioned by at least one respondent in relation to the above programmes. They are not necessarily representative of responses in relation to these programmes.

4.1.5   Use of the National Programmes by participating authorities

There was a great deal of capacity building activity underway in the case study authorities and in the main this had been in place for many years. The main trigger for this activity was CPA. Whether the outcome of CPA had been positive or negative, authorities had generally developed improvement plans in one form or another intended to develop their corporate and organisational capacity. Though the specifics of this activity varied from authority to authority, some broad themes emerged. For instance, over the last five years, many authorities had tightened and formalised their approaches to councillor development or had introduced these for the first time. While this was a general trend, many authorities had also faced a radical change in the make up of the political leadership during that period and had developed a more systematic approach as a result of having a large influx of inexperienced or new councillors. Councillor development activity ranged from developing short induction courses to ongoing development activity, the development of competency frameworks and mentoring.

Another trend was increased attention to staff development with leadership for senior officers and generic and project management training being aimed at middle managers. This often coincided with changes in management or organisational structure. A third theme of activity was the strengthening of business systems and processes including engagement with

Investors in People or the adoption of competency frameworks in relation to HR or revised business planning, performance or financial management systems.

Finally, many authorities had substantially reorganised several areas of service delivery over the last five years with a particular emphasis on children's and adults social care, customer services and back office support services (such as financial management, HR, payroll). Indeed, in some cases, the solution to perceived capacity gaps was not to build capacity internally but to purchase external capacity either in the form of short-term consultancy or in the form of longer-term strategic partnerships with the private sector, though this is not so much capacity building as simply accepting a continued reliance on the capacity of an external organisation.

Much of this work was funded through the authorities' mainstream budgets, but where case studies had been rated poor or weak at CPA they had often financed the implementation of improvement plans with Direct Support from the Capacity Building Programme. In many other places, authorities were engaged with their Improvement Partnership or had received funding for projects from the CBP Pilots scheme.

In this context, participation in the National Programmes often made up only a small contribution to the overall improvement and capacity building activity underway in the authorities, and was much less important than, in the case of poorly performing authorities, the contribution of Direct Support. Nevertheless, participation in National Programmes was often an important part in the wider improvement effort. For instance, in one case study, the National Programmes had been used to expand the remit of staff development to a wider group of staff beyond the first two or three tiers of management.

There was no universal pattern in the extent to which local authorities were using the National Programmes strategically as a coherent and conscious part of their overall improvement activity. Some were certainly conscious of the capacity building efforts underway across the organisation and had chosen to participate in the National Programmes as part of this integrated package. In other cases, however, participation appeared to be more ad-hoc and related to the demands of individual staff or their line managers. Likewise there was no clear pattern in the extent to which local authorities had taken a considered view of how participation in the National Programmes was linked to a specific capacity gap in the authority. Some case studies had clearly chosen to use the National Programmes in this way, while others had been less strategic in their decisions.

There was also evidence of use of multiple aspects of the CBP to address specific improvement needs. For instance, many authorities were utilising National Programmes and Direct Support. However, the extent to which activity was being duplicated or different funding streams being used to support the same activity was less clear because of confusion on the part of respondents. For example, in some places Direct Support may have been

used to support authorities that were already receiving subsidies for participation in National Programmes, though the evaluation did not collect sufficient evidence to suggest that this was definitively the case.

4.1.6   Explaining non-participation

Case study work in local authorities participating in National Programmes also explored the reasons why the authority had not participated in other National Programmes. Two additional case studies investigated the reasons why these authorities had not participated at all in the National Programmes. In the event, one of these case study authorities had in fact participated in two National Programmes in the period between case study selection and the fieldwork being undertaken.

Several reasons were forthcoming to explain why authorities would choose not to participate in the National Programmes.

In some cases, this was cost related. For instance, even where authorities had participated in some of the programmes, they commented that they were expensive. The Leadership programmes run by the IDeA, (the Future Leadership Programme and the Programme and Project Management programme) were all mentioned in this vein.

In other cases, the low levels of knowledge and awareness of the National Programmes appeared to be a barrier to wider take-up. Overall, the impression from discussions with respondents across the local government sector is that the CBP is not well understood. There is little knowledge of any central programme logic for the CBP and respondents in local authorities struggled to identify the National Programmes. Even respondents who had participated on a National Programme often didn't associate this with the CBP. Generally, however, Improvement Partnerships and Direct Support were more widely associated with the CBP and had a higher profile than did the National Programmes. This mirrors earlier findings in relation to the evaluation of the Pilot Programmes. Despite improvements made to the marketing and publicity material in relation to the CBP and attempts to publicise many of the National Programmes through the trade press, there continues to be a large degree of confusion and uncertainty in the sector about what support is available, especially through the National Programmes.

Specific areas of confusion about the National Programmes related to the support available to participate in these and who they were aimed at. There has been a widespread perception in the sector that the CBP and the National Programmes in particular were aimed for the most part at poorly performing authorities. This has been compounded in places by the operation of the subsidy regime which, understandably, has tended to favour poor and weak rated authorities. There has also been some confusion about the operation of the subsidy regime, even where it is applicable. This was due to a number of factors, including a lack of uniformity between the different National Programmes in terms of the subsidy arrangements available, frequent changes in the subsidy available for some of the National

Programmes and also the complicated mechanisms for claiming the subsidy in some cases. This latter problem is associated with the regulations surrounding the DCLG's capacity to deliver funding and support to local authorities and is taken up in Section 3.4.

Among the National Programmes, those operated by the IDeA were generally the most widely known and the IDeA was also the most popular source of information about what support is available. The dual role of the IDeA in operating both as a source of advice, guidance and information about what support is available to local authorities and a provider of that support drew comment both from other National Programme providers and from some respondents in local authorities, who had occasionally felt uncomfortable with the potential conflict of interest that might arise from this.

Many of the National Programme providers, especially those on the Framework Contract, were disappointed at the level of support that the DCLG had been able to offer in terms of marketing and promotional activity to spread greater awareness of the National Programmes. Certainly, the development of web-based materials to promote the National Programmes has sometimes lagged their development and the changes to the structure of the programme has not always helped in this process. The extent to which the CBP was marketed uniformly through the Regional Directors of Practice or the IDeA's regional associates was also unclear, with authorities in some regions reporting that this was effective and others reporting receiving confusing information through these channels. However, it is not clear that DCLG has the networks that would allow them to spread greater awareness of the National Programmes within the sector and in some cases local authorities are resistant to programmes promoted through central government, either simply because of centre-local tensions or because of political differences.

However, other more specific reasons were also cited. For instance, in one of the non-participating case studies the authority was in receipt of Direct Support to assist it in delivering its improvement plan. This was reported to be all-consuming, narrowing the potential for engagement with external programmes. This also supports the findings of fieldwork undertaken for other parts of this evaluation which suggests that 'recovering' local authorities often find difficulty in engaging with external initiatives because of the demands of implementing rapid improvement activities.

In the other non-participating case study, the authority was high performing and well regarded externally. Two factors appeared to prevent it from engaging with the National Programmes. These were a party political antipathy toward centrally designed programmes and a lack of confidence in the capacity of the central bodies like the IDeA and Employers Organisation to deliver them. Second, in this case the authority was large enough to design and implement its own tailored programmes to bridge capacity gaps and this was perceived to limit its need for external support.

4.2   Delivery of the National Programmes

Key Research Question: *How are the national programmes being delivered?*

The different National Programmes were delivered in very different ways. This was to be expected in terms of the specific delivery of improvement support, as each developed against a different set of specific objectives. In this regard, difference was positive, allowing local authorities a menu of alternative provision to allow some element of choice about the improvement support available to meet their needs, though noting the qualifications made above at Section 4.1.

These differences covered the following models of delivering improvement and capacity building support:

- *Residential training provision –* Many of the National Programmes are either solely or partly based around the provision of residential training provision to individual officers or elected members outside of the local authority setting. Where used, this model of delivery had the advantage of facilitating the development of networks and knowledge and experience sharing between different authorities. However, some individuals struggled to apply their learning in their everyday working environment and some authorities had not taken the decision to participate on the basis of an organisational need.
- *Training staff in-authority –* Several of the National Programmes involve providing training in individual authorities, most usually with groups of staff. These include the Procurement Skills Training programme and the Project and Programme Management programme. This model of delivery benefits from being able to address authority-specific issues and from being able to impact on a wider group of staff, making organisational change more likely. However, it can suffer from low levels of organisational commitment and does not facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience between authorities in the way that external and residential training provision does.
- *Work-based assignments –* Work based assignments or projects were included in several of the National Programmes as a means of facilitating 'action learning' and generating organisational benefits through establishing a direct link between individual development and organisational change. However, several of the National Programmes struggled to maintain these as a result of a lack of commitment from individual participants, the participating authorities and as a result of the heavy demands on provider resources.
- *Training coaches/mentors/peers –* Several of the National Programmes included elements of training coaches or mentors with the aim that these would then go on to offer coaching and mentoring. These varied between those programmes such as the Peer Clearing House, which aimed to establish a national system of peer support and those that aimed to establish a coaching or mentoring resource within individual authorities, such as the LEAP coaching programme.

- *Coaching / Peer Support / Skills Sharing* – In addition to training coaches and peers, some National Programmes also aimed to provide coaching and peer support or to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise within the local government sector. These aspects of delivery were often valued and thought to be beneficial in sharing knowledge and expertise within the sector. However, some problems were encountered in gaining the commitment of individuals to act as peers and to provide sufficient incentives for authorities to release staff to undertake this work.
- *Diagnostic consultation* – A strong theme across the National Programmes is the provision of some form of diagnostic consultation activity prior to designing the specific shape of delivery. For instance, the work of the Leadership Centre focuses heavily on diagnosing what sort of support authorities need. Likewise, the Diversity in Districts Programme also offered diagnostic activity in order to design specific support for the development and implementation of equalities policies.
- *Sub-regional local authority partnership projects* – The Skills Pathways programme involved establishing local partnership projects. Because of a lack of data it is difficult to judge the success of these activities, but some problems were reported from the provider in terms of generating organisational commitment, given the relatively small level of resource available. However, evidence from other components of the national evaluation have considered this model of delivering improvement support in much more detail.
- *Organising the supplier market* – The Leadership Centre had established work to organise the market for the provision of leadership support through establishing levels of approval from those simply listed in a database to those officially badged as 'approved' after having gone through a defined process.
- *Documents/Resource/Toolkits* – Several of the National Programmes involved more passive provision in the form of establishing toolkits or manuals for the conduct of improvement and capacity building activity. These included the Organisational Development and Workforce Remodelling programmes.

4.3   Achievement of objectives

Key Research Question: *To what extent are the national programmes meeting their objectives?*

There are two elements to this question. The first concerns the achievement of the overall objectives of the National Programmes. The second concerns the achievement of the objectives of each of the National Programmes in turn.

4.3.1   The collective objectives of the National Programmes
The overall objective of the National Programmes element of the CBP was:

"…the development of a national framework of capacity building programmes which are focussed on developing the corporate capacity of councils to deliver real improvements to their communities" (ODPM, 2003a).

"to develop affordable programmes that address councils' shared capacity building needs" (ODPM and LGA, 2004).

The CBP has clearly achieved its objectives in developing a series of National Programmes which are broadly mapped to the types of capacity building needs identified by local authorities (see 4.1). It is also clear that these Programmes are focused on the corporate and leadership capacity of local authorities. However, the linkage between these programmes and the improvements to communities is less clear. This is not to say that this has not been the case and some linkage between the development of corporate capacity and community improvements might be reasonably assumed but the evaluation provided very limited evidence of this.

A second qualification is also required. The extent to which the National Programmes have been successful in providing affordable programmes is also limited. 'Affordability' is a subjective question and has mainly been addressed by the evaluation through the views of providers, stakeholders and most importantly, respondents in the authorities themselves. The results of these discussions are reported below at Section 4.5.2.

Following from this, the extent to which the National Programmes have been able to offer capacity building support is obviously linked to their take-up by local authorities. In some cases, this has clearly happened. However, a small number of programmes have clearly not achieved a level of take-up that might have initially been expected. There is some evidence to suggest that this may have been linked to the failure of the CBP to effectively address the informational weaknesses in the market for capacity building support. Respondents in local authorities often did not understand which programmes were part of the CBP, how to access them, what they offer or what subsidies were available to them. The marketing material surrounding the CBP has often been confusing and, on this evidence, has not been effective in providing local authorities with the information that they needed.

4.3.2   Achievement of programme specific objectives
The achievement of specific programme objectives varies by National Programme. A summary assessment of the achievement of objectives is offered in Table 6. In places these objectives are interpreted rather than espoused. Interpreted objectives have been used where the stated objectives were concerned with impacts rather than processes. Impacts are addressed in Section 4.7 below.

Table 6: Achievement of Objectives by National Programme	
National Programme	**Achievement of Objectives**
Accelerated Development Programme	Initial objectives to "develop and implement a regionally delivered nationally led pilot programme providing skills development for 48 talented people" were achieved but pilot has ended without roll-out.
LEAP HR	The objectives to develop a coaching system for senior HR managers to build and share skills and capacity within the sector were achieved as was enhancement of confidence and professional capacity of individual participants.
National Graduate Development Programme	The programme has both established a graduate recruitment scheme and raised the profile of the sector as an employer.
Workforce Remodelling	Objectives have partially been achieved. A model and toolkit has been developed but take-up and impact is less clear.
Diversity in Districts	Most participant authorities have reached level 1 or above on the Equality Standard.
Skills Pathways	Insufficient evidence was available to judge the attainment of objectives.
Public Protection	A contribution has been made to resolving recruitment and retention problems in the target sectors.
Peer Clearing House	The infrastructure for training, accrediting and placing peers has been established and is operating.
Leadership Academy	Has provided a facility for councillor development and shared learning and network building between councillors from different local authorities.
Advanced Leadership Programme	Has established a facility for senior officer development and there is some evidence of achieving the desired impacts.
Gateway Reviews	Has been successful in providing support to procurement projects and helping them to progress. The project has been less successful in developing a sufficient pool of potential reviewers, though progress has been made.

Table 6: Achievement of Objectives by National Programme	
Procurement Skills Training	Successful in establishing a programme of skills training to elected members/senior managers and procurement officers. There is also some evidence of achieving impact objectives.
Future Leadership Programme	Has established a widely taken-up and well regarded middle management development programme and there was some evidence of the programme achieving its impact objectives.
Performance Improvement	Insufficient time has passed to judge whether the programme has achieved its objectives.
Project and Programme Management	Has established a project management programme and where this has been taken up with commitment there is some evidence of desired impacts.
Councillor Mentoring	Established a widely used programme of councillor mentoring.
Organisational Development	Developed an organisational development manual, though evidence of use and impact is unavailable.
Leadership Centre	Has established a number of initiatives to correct market failure on supply and demand side and to address the informational problems in the market, though not yet clear what the impact of this is.

4.4   Added Value of the National Programmes

Key Research Question: What is the added value of the

National Programmes?

4.4.1   Providing subsidised access to improvement support

Offering subsidised and often free support for capacity building. In a number
of cases it is clear that no other comparable support is available on similar
terms. These include Gateway Reviews, the leadership development activity
targeted at elected members through the Peer Clearing House, Leadership
Academy, Councillor Mentoring and Leadership Centre.

The Gateway Review programme is of particular note here, providing free
access to support from within the sector to assist with large scale and often
strategically important projects within the participating authorities. Even so,
some found participation awkward because reviews take place between
stages in the project when there is often significant pressure to move to the
next stage. If authorities had to pay substantial amounts of money for the
review, there is scope to suggest that they simply would not undertake
them, potentially leading to greater expense at a later stage. For instance, in
one authority, a middle manager responsible for coordinating the
procurement project reported that:

> *"I just thought, lets get the ITN [Invitation to Negotiate] out of the way
> first, or lets just get to the preferred bidder stage and then do a review"
> (Middle Manager and Gateway Review participant, Large urban authority
> in the North of England).*

Despite these initial concerns the respondent suggested that he was in fact
very pleased that the review had taken place when it did because it
highlighted some small problems that had been resolved at an early stage.

In other cases, even where comparable programmes are available individuals
have benefited from training and development opportunities that they
would not otherwise have been able to access. For instance, in one authority
which had made use of a comparable middle management development
course run by a local university, a middle ranking IT manager commented
that he would not have been able to undertake generic management
training without the full SOCITM subsidy applied to the Future Leadership
Programme.

Local authorities also reported that the subsidised training element of the
National Graduate Development Programme meant that they were able to
access graduate talent that they would not otherwise be able to attract. This
was so both because of the added incentive for the graduates offered by the
National Graduate Development Programme in comparison to simply
applying to a local authority for a comparable post and because some local
authorities felt that their participation in the programme gave them access

to a national labour market and therefore a pool of graduates that would not be available to them if they tried to recruit graduates directly.

4.4.2 Providing an opportunity for shared learning and knowledge transfer

The opportunity for shared learning within the sector and the transfer of ideas between individuals and authorities. This is the key advantage of the National Programmes in comparison with other more tailored capacity building initiatives. For instance, many of the fieldwork respondents who were involved in projects who had participated on programmes such as IDeA leadership programmes, the Future Leadership Programme, the training element of the Gateway Review programme and the Accelerated Development Programme reported that they learned a considerable amount from networking with colleagues from other local authorities as well as from the direct delivery of the programme content by the providers. This opportunity to learn and share knowledge and experience with others was widely valued by participants and cited as a key advantage of the 'national' as opposed to authority-specific approach.

4.4.3 Establishing a national infrastructure

The National Programmes have established a national infrastructure for certain key elements of improvement activity. For instance, taken together, the National Graduate Development, the Future Leadership Programme and the IDeA officer leadership programmes provide training and development provision across a continuum of career development. Similarly, the IDeA's councillor development programmes provide a range of development opportunities for councillors at all levels from induction to executive member and Leader.

In other respects the National Programmes have also provided a national infrastructure such as through the migration of the Gateway Review programme to the local government sector. Similarly, the establishment of the Peer Clearing House has provided an infrastructure for sharing expertise and skills within the sector.

4.4.4 Promoting a positive culture of staff training and development

Collectively, the full range of National Programmes have contributed, alongside other initiatives, to promote a positive culture in the local government sector toward staff training and development. Many of the case study authorities had recently made a new commitment to staff training and accessing the National Programmes, especially where subsidised, had been an important aspect of this. In addition, the councillor development programmes had contributed to a new commitment to councillor development. Even just establishing these programmes and awareness that they exist appeared to have contributed toward the general notion that such activities were a 'normal' part of a local authority's activities.

4.4.5 Recruitment, retention and skills gaps

The initial OPM research identified widespread skills gaps, in both generic and specific respects. The National Programmes have, to an extent,

contributed to filling these skills gaps. The National Graduate Development Programme and the Public Protection programmes have contributed to providing the sector with different mechanisms of attracting skilled workers. The different training programmes have contributed to improving the skills of the existing workforce, including in relation to specifically identified problem areas such as procurement. Several of the programmes have also enhanced the capacity of the sector to share skills and expertise within the sector, with the Peer Clearing House and the Gateway Review programmes being good examples of this.

4.4.6 Retention of capacity within the sector
A number of the programmes are explicitly aimed at retaining capacity building within the sector and enhancing the capacity of the sector to engage in self-help. Examples include the development of Peer Reviewers in the Gateway Review programme and the use of peers in the Peer Clearing House and Councillor Mentoring programmes.

4.5 Coordination between the National Programmes and other elements of the Capacity Building Programme

Key Research Question: How are the various National Programmes working together as well as with the other components of the CBP?

4.5.1 Linkages between the National Programmes
There are some examples of where National Programmes have good linkages with each other, though this is not universally the case and tends to be more likely where several programmes are delivered by the same provider. For instance:

- There were clear linkages between the National Graduate Development Programme and the Accelerated Development Programme with the latter initially seen as a progression and development programme for the former. Both were run initially by the Employers Organisation and had the same project manager. However, the scope for these theoretical linkages to materialise was limited because the decision was taken not to progress the role-out of the Accelerated Development Programme when the two programmes migrated to the IDeA. As such it was impossible for any NGDP participants to have progressed through that programme in order to participate on the Accelerated Development Programme.
- There were good linkages potential between the Skills Pathways project and the Workforce Remodelling project both of which were operated by the Employers Organisation. However, it is not clear that these were fully exploited. Certainly, the Workforce Remodelling toolkit does not include any reference to the Skills Pathways document.
- There are strong linkages between the Peer Clearing House and the Councillor Mentoring programme and also with the work of the Leadership Centre, with the latter two both sourcing peers from the Peer Clearing House.

- There are strong linkages between procurement skills training and Gateway Reviews. Indeed, participation on one was likely to lead to participation on the other programme. Again both were run by the same provider.

There is also further potential to strengthen the linkages between the different National Programmes as they develop. For instance, there is scope to distinguish a comprehensive suite of individual professional development support beginning with the National Graduate Development Programme, progressing through the Future Leadership Programme and into the revamped Advanced Leadership Programme (now the Academy for Executive Leadership) and further into the elite leadership work planned by the Leadership Centre. Take-up of all the programmes might benefit from these linkages being made more explicit to the sector.

4.5.2 Overlap between the National Programmes and other elements of the CBP

There is a large amount of overlap between different elements of the CBP in terms of the general themes of work being undertaken. The National Programmes address areas of improvement activity that have also been highlighted in Improvement Partnerships and which have been the subject of improvement activity funded through Direct Support. An indication of the types of overlap and commonality between the types of improvement activity being supported by the different elements of the CBP is presented in Table 4. Examples include middle management development programmes funded by Direct Support and Improvement Partnerships which are very similar to the Future Leadership Programme. In other cases, Improvement Partnerships or Direct Support are funding the development of competency models, without necessarily taking advantage of those developed through the Peer Clearing House (for elected members) or the experience of the Workforce Remodelling or Skills Pathways programmes. In some cases these National Programmes had influenced the development of more locally specific improvement activity, but the extent to which this was the case was often unclear.

In addition to these common themes, there is also some overlap in terms of the suppliers of capacity building support to local authorities through the different component elements of the CBP. For instance, National Programme Providers (especially the IDeA) have been involved in supporting activities in Improvement Partnerships and in authorities receiving Direct Support. Other National Programme providers are also attempting to engage with Improvement Partnerships as a means of sustaining the programme in light of the proposed changes to the overall management and funding of the CBP.

Table 7: Evidence of overlap between National Programmes and other components of the CBP			
	Improvement Partnerships	**National Programmes**	**Direct Support**
Training and development of elected members	• Association of London Government Partnership, • Devon Improvement Programme, • West Midlands Improvement Partnership, • Leicestershire and Rutland Improvement Partnership, • Improvement Partnership for North East Local Government, • North West Improvement Network	• Peer clearing house/ Councillor mentoring • Leadership academy • Procurement training: M&SM	More than half of authorities receiving Direct Support are undertaking training and development of elected members.
Training and development of senior staff	• Leicestershire and Rutland Improvement Partnership, • Kent/Swindon • Association of London Government Partnership • Improvement Partnership for North East Local Government	• Advanced Leadership Programme • Performance Improvement • Procurement training • Gateway Reviews	More than 40% of authorities receiving Direct Support are undertaking training and development of officers. Much of this is aimed at senior managers.
Training and Development of Middle Managers	• Improvement Partnership for North East Local Government • Leicestershire and Rutland Improvement Partnership, • Kent/Swindon • Devon Improvement Programme • Association of London Government Partnership	• Accelerated Development Programme • Future Leadership Programme • Procurement Skills training • Gateway reviews	More than 40% of authorities receiving Direct Support are undertaking training and development of officers. Much of this is aimed at middle managers.

Table 7: Evidence of overlap between National Programmes and other components of the CBP

Development and improvement of internal management systems	• Improvement Partnership for North East Local Government • Leicestershire and Rutland Improvement Partnership, • Kent/Swindon • Devon Improvement Programme • Association of London Government Partnership • North West Improvement Network	• Skills Pathways • Workforce Development • Diversity in Districts • HR People Management • Procurement Skills training • Gateway reviews • Project and Programme Management • Performance Improvement • Organisational Development	11% of authorities receiving Direct Support are using the resources to support CPA preparation and improvement, 30% are undertaking other organisational development, 26% are supporting performance management activities, 12% are supporting financial management processes; 12% are focusing on project management, 15% are focusing on HR/People management systems.
Communication and consultation	• Improvement Partnership for North East Local Government • Leicestershire and Rutland Improvement Partnership, • Devon Improvement Programme		8% of authorities are focusing on communications.

The commonalities in the types of issue being addressed through the different elements of the CBP confirms that these are the areas where there is need for support. While central government set the themes of the National Programmes (though after undertaking comprehensive research into the subject), the activities developed through the Improvement Partnerships and in authorities receiving Direct Support have been shaped more directly at a local level. However, it may also be that the benefits of some aspects of the National Programmes, such as sharing knowledge and experience within the sector, are being undermined by the development of local alternatives to participation in the National Programmes. Sharing knowledge, expertise and learning was of course, one of the founding principles of the CBP.

4.6   Cost effectiveness

Key Research Question: Is the national programme cost effective and does it offer value for money?

At the outset, the methodology for addressing cost effectiveness was to be guided by work underway in the wider Meta-evaluation of the Local Government Modernisation on cost effectiveness. However, this work ultimately did not provide any useable outputs. Since in most cases there was insufficient data to undertake cost effectiveness analysis the evaluation has sought to address cost effectiveness through discussions with respondents. These discussions identified a number of different aspects to cost effectiveness.

4.6.1   Affordability

Affordability referred to the cost of participating in the programmes in terms of user fees. Respondents' views on affordability also varied widely between the different programmes and at times whether they had been able to benefit from one of the many and changing subsidies available. Several of the programmes were regarded as expensive in terms of user-fees, sometimes even where subsidies were in place, such as the in the case of the Future Leadership Programme, the Advanced Leadership Programme and the Project and Programme Management Programme. Participants acknowledged and this expense and some mentioned a desire for the greater organisational impacts of the course to be realised in order to gain maximum benefit from the investment.

> *"[I] Feel strongly I should put something back after so much money spent on the ALP." (ALP Participant, Case Study 2).*

Subsidies were thought to be very important in terms of enabling participation and it is not at all clear that the market could sustain demand with the full cost of user fees. Buy-One Get One Free offers for courses such as the Future Leadership Programme and the Advanced Leadership Programme often facilitated their participation within case study authorities.

In the case of the Project and Programme Management Programme, despite the subsidy arrangements in place, participants in both case study authorities reported that the programme was expensive. In one case further work on project management was being procured from a cheaper local alternative and in the other it was being sourced from an existing private sector partner.

While it was not necessarily thought to be currently expensive because of the operation of the subsidy regime, there was some evidence that the National Graduate Development Programme may also struggle to sustain demand in the event of local authorities having to pay full cost user-fees. One authority (Case Study 15) was looking at ways to ensure that the NGDP was at the heart of their newly developed talent management strategy so that they could sustain their participation in the programme should the current subsidy regime change.

4.6.2   Costs of staff time

While some of the programmes were fully subsidised, this did not mean that they were perceived as cost free by respondents in local authorities. For instance, though it was well regarded generally respondents reported that Gateway Reviews did involve a significant amount of staff time in terms of preparation and participation in the review.

> *"I think the principle is good and right to make sure things are on track but it does need to be streamlined" (Gateway Review Participant, Case Study 5).*

A number of respondents also noted that they had found it difficult to participate in Gateway Review training or, having participated in the training, difficult to be part of a review team. A lack of time was named as the key reason for this (Case Studies 7 & 12).

4.6.3   Quality of delivery

While some of the National Programmes were thought to be expensive in terms of user fees, some respondents reported that this was justified because of the quality of delivery. For instance, some respondents reported that while expensive, the Advanced Leadership Programme and the Future Leadership Programme had been worth it and they could clearly identify why the programme was so expensive. One ALP participant explained how they had very high expectations of the course but also of how these had been surpassed.

> *"I told the tutor that I expect this course to be life changing." (ALP Participant, Case Study 5).*

In the case of the Performance Improvement and Management Programme, several participants also stressed the need for programmes to continue to deliver in terms of quality. This was especially because of the heavy investment of time demanded of the participants on the programme and the 'hole in capacity' left as result of senior managers being away from their authorities whilst they attended.

4.6.4   Impact on efficiency

There was little overall evidence of efficiency gains as a result of participation in the National Programmes. The exception to this was estimated efficiency gains provided by the provider of the Gateway Review programme. According to the Office of Government Commerce, the savings produced by a Gateway Review are on average around 4-5% of the overall value of the procurement project which, because of the high value of many procurement projects would suggest that the savings produced by the Review programme are considerable. These cost savings are in comparison to having undertaken the procurement programme without a Review, they are not a comparison with alternative provision.

4.6.5   Implications

Above are the key findings on the cost effectiveness of the National Programme which highlight the price sensitivity of demand for capacity building activities in local authorities. They suggest three key implications. First, future marketing for capacity building support will need to clearly identify and substantiate the benefits that might arise from participation. Second, careful consideration will need to be given to the level of user-fees that the sector will bear. Third, they suggest that there may be a need to 'educate' local authorities in a more general sense about the benefits to be had from continuing investment in capacity building, including staff development. In this regard lessons might be learned from the various 'business case' approaches often used to persuade the private sector to implement new regulations or voluntary codes of practice. Such approaches will also need to be carefully linked to the implementation of future national policy objectives and local priorities expressed through (shared) outcome targets.

4.7   Impact of the Capacity Building Programme for Local Government

Key Research Question: What is the impact of the National Programmes on the sector, networks of authorities, individual authorities and on individuals who take part in its initiatives?

4.7.1   Impact at Individual Level

The National Programmes achieved impacts across the areas in which they were intended (see Table 1). Impacts were most pronounced in terms of the development of new skills and increased confidence. The acquisition of new skills tended to be related to generic management and project management competencies. On the Accelerated Development Programme the 'Project Management' module was thought to have had a particular impact. Participants on other programmes such as the Public Protection Programme also mentioned increased skills in project and time management. However, generally, evidence of the acquisition of hard skills was less convincing than evidence around softer skills. In one instance where both the participant and their manager were interviewed about the acquisition of new skills it was

clear there was an issue as to how much the skills of the individual participant had actually improved.

> *"I haven't noticed that skills have improved particularly. I don't think it was a skills programme and if it was it didn't work. I think (they) have more knowledge about how things happen but it hasn't changed (their) ability to make things happen." (Senior Manager, commenting on FLP participant)*

The acquisition of softer skills included communication, self awareness, the awareness of emotional impact on others and self management and effectiveness. A further strong theme was around leadership and influencing skills. Several of the National Programmes also achieved impacts that were unintended, at least in terms of the overall programme logic. These include enhanced career development opportunities, enhanced leadership and soft-skill development. For example, one participant on the Performance Improvement and Management Programme was able to demonstrate the impact of the programme on them as an individual by explaining that their job role and title had changed as a direct result of their taking part. After completing the second of the three events on the programme they presented a paper to their corporate management team to set up a team of staff dedicated to organisational development. The proposal was accepted and the participant was asked to head up this team. The same participant had also kept in touch with some of the people from other authorities whom she had met on the programme. One of which, (a chief executive of a three star authority), was now mentoring them on an informal basis.

A summary of impacts is by each National Programme is included in Table 6.

4.7.2   Impact at Organisational Level
Despite the dramatic organisational impacts outlined in the example above, impacts at organisational level were generally less pronounced than those at the individual level, with many respondents reporting that they faced problems in securing the translation of their individual development to organisational change. Problems included a failure of the organisation to establish appropriate mechanisms to share their learning, (as noted in the evaluation of the ADP), an insufficient number of individual officers being trained concurrently, (as noted in the evaluation of the Leadership Academy) or a failure to link individual development to organisational objectives.

The culture of the organisation, and specifically whether it was open to new ideas and changing working practices or relatively rigid in these terms, was a key determinant of the capacity to translate individual development to organisational change. Interestingly, several of the programmes were thought to explicitly equip individuals to challenge such a culture, including the leadership programmes run by the IDeA and the NGDP. For example in Case Study 15 the impact of the NGDP programme is seen by senior management not only in terms of the quality of the work that the graduates produce but also in terms of the impact that they have had on the culture of the organisation.

"I've noticed a change in culture here over the past few years and I think it is about just having young people who are quite happy to challenge and have a completely different perspective and if you have people like that in an organisation then you start attracting more of them. If only we could have more". (Senior Manager, Case Study 15).

Where they were present the main impacts across the National Programmes was to strengthen project and programme management, performance management and business planning and target setting processes. There was also evidence that the National Programmes, cumulatively, helped to promote the sharing of good practice within and between local authorities, for example through the Leadership Academy, Peer Clearing House and the Gateway Review process. There was generally less evidence of impact on the quality of service delivery from the National Programmes. There were, in places, reported assumptions that the development of corporate capacity, would lead to improvements in service delivery but actual examples of these connections were hard to identify.

A summary of impacts by each National Programme is included in Table 8.

Table 8: Impact of National Programmes at Individual Level

	Accelerated Dev Prog	LEAP Coaching	NGDP	Workforce Remod.	Diversity in Districts	Skills Pathways	Pub Protection	Peer Clearing House	Leadership Academy	Advanced Leadership Prog	Gateway Reviews	Perf Imp	Proc Skills Training	Future Lead. Prog	Project and Prog Man	Org Devp
Development of new skills	■	■	■	Insufficient evidence available as take-up of the toolkit has not been monitored	■	Insufficient evidence available because of lack of data provided by programme provider	■	■	■	■	■	Insufficient evidence available at the moment – fieldwork ongoing.	■	■	■	Insufficient evidence available as take-up of the toolkit has not been monitored
Increased confidence		■			■		■	■	■	■			■	■		
Increased job satisfaction		■					■	■		■			■			
Improved project and programme management	■	■					■	■			■				■	■
Improved learning, more innovation and sharing of good practice	■	■	■						■		■					
Other impacts	Procurement Political awareness		Career Devp outcomes				Career Devp outcomes		Improved working relationships and self awareness	Leadership capability			Awareness of proc issues	Emotional awareness of self and imp on others		

The shaded areas refer to where evidence of impact was present.

Table 9: Impact of National Programmes at Organisational Level

	Accelerated Dev Prog	LEAP Coaching	NGDP	Workforce Remod.	Diversity in Districts	Skills Pathways	Pub Protection	Peer Clearing House	Leadership Academy	Advanced Leadership Prog	Gateway Reviews	Perf Imp	Proc Skills Training	Future Lead. Prog	Project and Prog Man	Org Devp
Better business planning and target setting		�҂	▣	Insufficient evidence available as take-up of the toolkit has not been monitored		Insufficient evidence available because of lack of data provided by programme provider			▣		▣	Insufficient evidence available at the moment – fieldwork ongoing.				Insufficient evidence available as take-up of the toolkit has not been monitored
Promotion of equality and diversity																
Improved recruitment and retention	▣		▣		▣		▣									
Improved project and programme management			▣								▣		▣	▣	▣	
Better performance management			▣							▣	▣					
Improved learning, more innovation and sharing of good practice		▣	▣								▣		▣			
Service improvements								▣	▣	▣						
Other	Filling skills haps						Additional staff resources		leadership	Leadership Absence man	Improved procurement projects		Team confidence			

The shaded areas refer to where evidence of impact was present.

4.8 Linkages between the National Programmes and the wider policy agenda

Key Research Question: How do the National Programmes promote equality and diversity; the shared priorities, efficiency and sustainability?

All the National Programmes were connected in some ways to the wider improvement agenda for local authorities. They were clearly linked to improvement in the corporate capacity of local authorities and addressing gaps and weaknesses in capacity. Many of the programmes were also explicitly and implicitly linked to the Pay and Workforce Strategy for local government. The procurement related programmes in particular were linked to the delivery of the National Procurement Strategy and the wider efficiency agenda. The Diversity in Districts programme and some parts of the Leadership Academy were directly linked to the equalities agenda. However, several of the other programmes might be thought to be indirectly linked to both the efficiency and equalities agendas because of their linkages to improving management capacity and the promotion of systems and procedures which make management practices more open and regulated.

4.9 Lessons Learned from the National Programmes

4.9.1 Shared learning vs. tailored design

There is clearly a tension in the findings produced between one of the key advantages and beneficial impacts associated with many of the National Programmes and some of the reasons cited to explain why the National Programmes have not achieved higher levels of take-up. On one hand, participating individuals and authorities identify the benefits of programmes that facilitate learning from other individuals and local authorities as a key element of added value. The benefits of a national pool for sharing knowledge, experience and skills was also acknowledged. However, on the other hand, a widely reported concern was that the National Programmes are not able to be sufficiently tailored to the specific needs of individual local authorities. This was felt to limit their attractiveness and, as such, take-up.

A key lesson learned, therefore is that in developing national programmes of support a balance needs to be struck between providing opportunities for shared learning and a more tailored means of delivering to the specific needs of individual local authorities.

4.9.2 Targeting of delivery mechanisms and demand-side incentives

The evidence detailed above suggests that some local authorities may have more to gain than others from the specific benefits arising from the National Programmes, especially where they relate to small numbers of individual beneficiaries in the first instance. Where this is the case, organisational change is most likely where the organisation already wants to change and there is widespread acceptance of learning from elsewhere and experience of and processes in place to internalise the benefits of skills, knowledge or

expertise learned through engagement with a National Programme. As such, this may suggest that demand side incentives for these mechanisms for the delivery of improvement support should recognise that the lowest performers may not be able to take full advantages of the potential benefits of National Programmes and that these should rather be deployed further into the 'improvement journey'.

4.9.3   Stimulating capacity building activity in local authorities

Overall the National Programmes have, in places, been able to address aspects of the perceived market failure in regard to capacity building support to local authorities. Some of the National Programmes have been successful in generating high levels of take-up. There is also evidence that subsidies and advice to local authorities has helped to stimulate demand from local authorities. However, some problems clearly remain. There is some indicative evidence that demand may not be able to be sustained where subsidies are removed and the change in the nature of the subsidy regime will clearly pose significant challenges. This may suggest that the market has not yet matured enough to be sustainable without continued intervention. It may also suggest that intervention may be necessary on a more long-term basis. In addition, there is substantial evidence that the market for capacity building support to local authorities still suffers from informational problems, with many respondents in local authorities being unaware of the types of support that is available.

Finally, there is some evidence to suggest that the sector is more comfortable with sharing and retaining knowledge, skills, resources and capacity within the sector rather than relying on external support. National Programmes that focused on retaining capacity within the sector and sharing resources to build capacity were often regarded highly, even if this was often difficult to achieve because of barriers to cooperation such as time and resource constraints.

4.9.4   Translating individual development to organisational change

Evidence from detailed work in the case study authorities suggested that the key determinant of impact was not necessarily the quality of the National Programmes themselves but how these were utilised by the participating local authorities. Those authorities that had a noticeable 'culture' of openness to new ideas, changing working practices and commitment to flexibility appeared to find it easier to translate the benefits of participation in the National Programmes into organisational change. For instance, in one case study individual beneficiaries reported that they found it natural that they should share the benefits of their learning on returning to the authority. They also reported that managers and colleagues were open to trying different ways of working as a result of this. Indeed, in this authority participation on one National Programme was seen as a 'pilot' activity and other staff were engaged in alternative provision, with the aim of comparing the experience and impacts achieved.

Where this culture was less embedded individual development could be translated to organisational change but this was less spontaneous. In these

authorities more formal attention needed to be given to ensuring that this occurred. This is not difficult and there is no set method for achieving it. What is needed is first a conscious decision and commitment at the point of deciding to participate in some development opportunity that the benefits of this should be shared or linked to work related activities. A good example of this is ensuring that staff development is linked to changing working practices or responsibilities. Second, is simply some mechanism for sharing the benefits of training or allowing these to be applied in the workplace. This can be as simple as having an agenda item in staff development/ appraisal interviews and scheduling this to coincide with return from training or development. Other means might include a short presentation in team meetings or sharing of a note on what had been learned alongside any materials provided. All this sounds very simple, but a large number of our respondents had received development or training and had subsequently returned to their workplace without colleagues or managers even being aware of this. Finally, the translation of individual development to organisational change is clearly easier where development is not confined to one or two individuals. Where a significant group of staff has undergone development it is clearly easier to influence working practices.

Some of the National Programmes had attempted to address these issues. For instance, several included workplace placements or projects and others seek to involve a whole group of staff. These have though, varied in their success. The Project and Programme Management programme for instance has experienced difficulties in generating a sufficient level of take-up within participating local authorities. Participants on the Future Leadership Programme have found it difficult to develop the projects associated with the programme and the provider has experienced difficulties in supervising these. While the National Graduate Development Programme has been more successful in this regard, careful thought needs to be given to how these problems can be overcome.

The ways in which local authorities can maximise the likelihood of translating individual development to organisational change are:

- Consciously choosing to participate in the first place as part of an initiative to fill an identified skills gap and making an active decision that the specific programme chosen is relevant to that gap.
- Consciously selecting individual participants on the grounds that the individual(s) concerned will be willing and effective at sharing their learning and that they occupy a position in the authority where new learning is required and from where others can be influenced.
- Consciously selecting the numbers of participants to ensure that, where feasible, a 'critical mass' can be achieved.
- Providing mechanisms to internalise new learning and development. These can be as simple as reporting back what has been learned to team meetings or sharing printed materials with colleagues. They might also include structured feedback as part of staff development and appraisal sessions. Finally, they include a willingness on the part of line managers to do things differently and apply new skills and expertise in the workplace.

- Linking training and development to the strengthening or use of organisational systems and processes.

4.9.5 Marketing and promotional activity

The findings from the evaluation suggest that marketing and promotional activities need to be improved. This is the case in a number of respects:

- In the clarity and consistency of the explanation of what support is available and how this can be accessed.
- In the clarity and consistency of the explanation of what subsidies are available to who and how these can be claimed.
- In the rationale for different methods of delivery. For instance, the reason why national delivery is desirable and the benefits that can derive from this, such as shared learning.

This is not though simply a case of improved literature but also improved ways of distributing this information to local authorities.

4.9.6 Managing multiple and complex national programmes

Several important lessons can be learned from the evaluation with regard to the management of multiple and complex national programmes:

- The CBP was aimed to build the capacity of local authorities. However, it needs to be recognised that managing a suite of national programmes requires significant central management capacity. The changes of staffing and discontinuities in the institutional structure in central government in the initial stages of the CBP disrupted its development. It may also be the case that central government does not have the capacity to manage the CBP in the future and this may be better administrated by a separate organisation, though it is important that this is seen to be within the sector. The proposal to transfer some of the management functions of the CBP to the IDeA may help to overcome capacity challenges around the central management of the CBP.
- There is clear importance in developing and sustaining a clear and consistent overall programme logic. The changes, and, equally important, perceived changes in emphasis around what the CBP was intended to achieve, how it was to do this and who it was aimed at hampered the communication of this central programme logic with implications for take-up and ultimately impact.
- The governance and overall coordination of the National Programmes suffered from a lack of consistency in structures and procedures between programmes and over time. The findings of the evaluation suggest that managing complex and multiple national programmes of this sort requires a degree of standardisation in governance, performance management and reporting arrangements.

- The findings of the evaluation reveal a degree of tension in the role some providers as both 'independent' advisers of local authorities and providers of services. Enhanced clarity over the role of organisations like the IDeA and better communication of this to the sector would be beneficial to the overall management of the National Programmes. This will be even more important in the light of proposed changes which will see the IDeA have a greater role in the management and administration of the National Programmes. In this regard, it is not enough for sufficiently appropriate governance arrangements to be in place. These also need clearly explaining to the sector to remove any confusion about roles that might arise.
- In the development and management of national programmes clear and transparent thought needs to be given to marketing and promotional activity at the beginning of their development and clear agreement about who carries the financial responsibility for this needs to be established.

4.9.7   Sustainability and intellectual property ownership

In any intervention that seeks to correct market failure or perceived market failure, early thought needs to be given to the intended nature of the intervention. All parties need to understand at the outset the nature of the intervention and whether it is intended to be merely a pump-priming measure with limited life-span or whether there is a perceived need for a longer-term and ongoing intervention. Of course, the nature of public policy is that this is not always possible to judge at the outset. However, in this instance clear and understandable criteria need to be in place to judge whether or not continued intervention might be necessary, what form this might take and how and when any final decision might be taken on this question. There is evidence from the evaluation of confusion among providers over this issue, especially with regard to the operation of demand-side subsidies. Such decisions over the nature of the intervention also need to be borne in mind when assessing the extent to which and how the supply-side is to be stimulated, for instance in the development of models of delivery and content.

A related issue that needs to be carefully addressed in the management of similar future projects regards the question of sustainability and intellectual property ownership. If some of the National Programmes prove to be unsustainable in the event of changes to the subsidy regime, a clear and uniform policy needs to be adopted with regard to the ownership and use of any intellectual property that has been developed in the course of programme delivery and development. Even where a programme proves to be unsustainable there is clearly merit in considering how this material might be put to best use. The evaluation findings suggest that even programmes that have struggled to generate take-up have produced models of development that are well regarded by the sector and have potential for future beneficial impact.

4.9.8   Corporate capacity, governance and service delivery

The National Programmes were conceived of against an understanding of local authorities' capacity building needs as generic and organisational and

not overly influenced by the politicised nature of councils as local democratic institutions. Early CPA inspections had driven this focus. The evidence collected through the National Programmes did support the viability of this notion, to an extent. The National Programmes were certainly aligned with the generic needs that local authorities identified. However, as local authorities have built their generic organisational capacity, through participation in the Capacity Building Programme and other activities, their future needs will increasingly be linked to their specialist role as local democratic institutions and providers and commissioners of services to the local community. As such, the proposed changes to the Capacity Building Programme, put forward in the 2006 local government White Paper, appear to be in line with the future needs of the local government sector.

Appendix One:
The Performance
Partnership Programmes

Accelerated Development Programme

Introduction

The Accelerated Development Programme (ADP) is a pilot development programme aimed at individuals who have worked in local government for at least two years and have shown potential for future leadership but who have not yet reached a middle-management position. The pilot operated between October 2004 and September 2006 in three regions (East Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, and London). Sixteen fully subsidised places were available per region.

Delegates to the pilot programme went through a complicated nomination process. Local authorities in the three regions were asked to nominate delegates. Authorities wishing to participate were expected to engage line managers before distributing application forms, either generally or to selected employees. Completed applications were forwarded to managers who were expected to complete an initial assessment of each candidate. This was intended to be used for each authority to select up to two delegates (one being a 'preferred' candidate with a second – 'back-up' – candidate). Local authorities' selection decisions were to be based on a "local assessment of organisational priorities and capabilities and personal attributes of applicants" (Employers Organisation, 2004). The personal attributes of the applicants and nominated delegates were based on a series of criteria under eight key competencies. These are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Accelerated Development Programme: Assessment Criteria - Key Competencies

1. Individual leadership

Creating an environment and influencing other people such that they will work to achieve a shared vision

1. Takes a longer term view rather than focusing solely on the immediate task in hand; builds a shared vision
2. Recognises internal and external opportunities and threats
3. Volunteers for additional responsibilities and gains the respect and trust of those who work with them
4. Balances and prioritises community, organisational, team and individual needs and adapts leadership style to suit circumstances
5. Has high personal standards of behaviour; sets a good example; acts with integrity and social responsibility; inspires confidence from others
6. Displays energy, enthusiasm and initiative with a drive to succeed and overcome obstacles
7. Networks extensively; building productive relationships with others both within and outside organisation.

2. Change orientation

Predicting, promoting and embracing change to make things better than they are now

1. Free thinking, independent and curious
2. Challenges the status quo; is not bound by historical structures and ways of working
3. Questions how and why things are done as they are
4. Gathers information from wide range of sources; reviews external benchmarks and innovative examples of service delivery
5. Suggests and implements more efficient and effective ways of working and evaluates the results
6. Seeks creative solutions to overcome problems
7. Thinks ahead and willing to take advantage of opportunities and anticipate the effects of likely threats
8. Willing to take risks, having recognised the possible impact of the risk, making any necessary arrangements to mitigate possible adverse outcomes.

Table 10: Accelerated Development Programme: Assessment Criteria - Key Competencies

3. Emotional intelligence

Achieving objectives through understanding and awareness of how own and others' emotions affect people's decisions and actions

1. Possesses a sense of self worth and self confidence
2. Realistic about own strengths and weaknesses
3. Aware of personal impact on others; sensitive to other people's feelings and their different values and needs
4. Shows empathy and humility
5. Is reliable, consistent and trustworthy
6. Collaborates – builds relationships; challenges and manages conflict constructively
7. Demonstrates persistence in achieving desired goals and objectives; not easily deflected or put off
8. Manages stress in a manner that is not destructive to self or others (controls impulses to display negative behaviours such as impatience, irritation, anger, hostility, etc.).

4. Communication skills

Using a variety of communication methods to promote dialogue and shared understanding whilst maintaining respect for self and others

1. Assertive – displays open, honest and equal communication
2. Communication skills (written & oral) – well presented, clear and understandable in suitable language and style for different audiences/ purposes; considers impact and whether medium chosen is suitable for the purpose
3. Uses appropriate non-verbal communication/ body language and is aware of that demonstrated in others
4. Encourages a two-way dialogue – is open to other views and ideas, displays active listening skills, values other people's contributions, builds on others' ideas, engages in joint problem solving
5. Presentation skills – creates a positive impact, inspires trust and confidence, communicates with enthusiasm and commitment
6. Does not avoid confronting difficult issues, but approaches them with due care and planning, seeking advice if necessary
7. When disagrees with others, puts views across constructively with rationale – avoids blocking tactics, putting others down and game playing.

5. Research and analysis skills

Capable of gathering information from a variety of sources, analysing the results and drawing logical conclusions

1. Capable of making decisions based on complex and sometimes conflicting information
2. Capable of understanding and analysing numerical data and drawing meaningful conclusions
3. Displays sound judgement based on logical, reasoned arguments
4. Applies creative thinking to problem solving process
5. Makes well informed decisions based on evaluation of risks and consequences.

6. Self development and motivation

Possesses an inner motivation and drive to achieve high quality performance; seeks opportunities to increase self awareness and personal development

1. Displays drive and ambition for developing own knowledge, skills and new experiences
2. Seeks/welcomes feedback on own performance, admits and learns from mistakes
3. Keeps up to date with professional knowledge and expertise
4. Strives for excellent performance and continuous improvement
5. Takes interest in community issues of relevance to local government
6. Employee is willing to give own time and effort to gain benefit from the ADP for themselves, their current employer, local government and the community.

Table 10: Accelerated Development Programme: Assessment Criteria - Key Competencies

7. Customer Focus

Delivers a high quality, reliable and responsive service that aims to meet customers' needs and desires

1. Marketing – researches whether services are meeting customers' existing and future needs and desires at the right time, place, standard and cost
2. Proactive consultation - uses a variety of means to seek the views of existing and potential customers
3. Manages customer expectations and conflicting demands/priorities
4. Manages customer relations - keeps customers informed, shares information in a timely manner and deals effectively with complaints in a manner which enhances customers' perception of the service
5. Monitors, benchmarks and evaluates customer satisfaction, other performance measures and cost effectiveness; acts on outcomes seeking continuous improvement
6. Enhances the reputation of the service by own commitment, presentation and professionalism.

8. Equality/diversity

Actively promotes equality of opportunity by removing unfair discrimination and managing different individual or group needs, traditions and approaches

1. Treats all people with equal respect whilst recognising and valuing differences
2. Aware of legislative framework and champions council diversity policies and standards
3. Consults minority/disadvantaged groups to ensure that their views are heard and taken into account in planning and delivering services and employment matters
4. Willing to understand and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate different individual and/or community needs, e.g. part time working, different communication needs, religious observance, non-traditional lifestyles, etc.
5. Challenges inappropriate comments and/or discriminatory behaviour in others
6. Listens and responds proactively to formal and/or informal allegations of discrimination or harassment.

Source: Employers Organisation for Local Government (2004:6-8).

Authorities putting forward nominations were to commit to provide a supportive environment to participating employees by:

- adjusting work commitments and targets to allow full participation;
- providing access to management and other information related to their research and learning;
- providing opportunities and support for employees to undertake project work in the authority linked to the modules on the course;
- assessing project outcomes and providing feedback to the employee;
- providing a mentor to support the employee;
- facilitating a secondment either within the authority or in another organisation during the final six months of participation; and
- Facilitating ways in which the employees new knowledge and skills can be shared and utilised within the authority.

The programme provides practical training in six core skills areas (project management, procurement, performance management, partnerships, working in a political environment, policy development and application), with module content and delivery provided by the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) at Birmingham University over six three-day residential courses (in an 18 month period). This formal provision is augmented by work-based assignments, mentoring and a subsequent secondment within the host local authority to allow the individual to apply the skills learnt on the programme. The programme is not then solely a staff development exercise for the individual, but offers substantial opportunity for the individual level impacts to be translated to organisational change, development and improvement.

Background
The ADP was framed by the realisation that the local government sector needed to do more to develop its own future leaders. For example the initial 'Activity Brief' (Employers Organisation, 2004a) cited research suggesting that only 4% of authorities have succession planning in place and only 10% use appraisal processes to identify future 'high flyers'. Other research which suggested that the development of future leaders from within the sector should gain additional emphasis (Kessler, 2003) was also cited as rationale. As such, the purpose of the programme was set out as:

> "To retain and develop our most talented new staff and to contribute to growing future senior managers and leaders." (Employers Organisation, 2004a:2).

Aims and Objectives
The ADP had the following aims and objectives:

> "To create, develop and implement a regionally-delivered, nationally-led pilot programme providing skills development for 48 talented people with at least 2 years experience in local government and who are able to demonstrate the potential for future leadership roles in local government.

In light of the pilot to consider whether a national programme roll-out is viable and sustainable in the sector." (Employers Organisation, 2004a:1).

Project Delivery

The project was delivered as planned. However, the Pilot has now come to an end and there are no plans to roll it out as a national project. Instead, the results and learning from the project will be used to inform the development of a wider set of middle management development programmes developed and run by the IDeA.

The project had few problems achieving the required take-up. The only challenges encountered were related to the ways in which different local authorities operated the selection and assessment procedures. If such an approach were to be used again, local assessor/selectors might be trained and offered accreditation. The provider was confident that, had the ADP had been rolled-out, take-up would have been sufficient. More than half of the participants have requested that their authorities pay the additional fee for the participant to complete a Diploma in Local Government Management at Warwick University.

There is some spill-over and connections between the ADP and other National Programmes, principally the NGDP (both projects were coordinated by the same Project Manager at the EO). ADP had initially been conceived as a progression development programme for former NGDP graduates but this did not materialize as ADP did not run for long enough to be able to take participants who had already been through NGDP. Connections with other parts of the CBP, such as Improvement Partnerships or Direct Support, had not been developed.

The provider perceived the added value of the project as being that it started debates in local authorities about how they identify, select, nurture and develop talented individuals. However, there was no available evidence of local authorities changing their practices with regard to these issues as a result of engagement with the ADP. Survey-based evaluation activities were mainly focused on individual rather than organizational impacts.

While the provider thought that ADP was effective, they found it difficult to quantify cost effectiveness because of a lack of direct comparator programmes. No formal assessment of whether ADP could have been sustained in the market had been undertaken. However, feedback from local authorities gained as part of the EO's evaluation of the ADP suggested that a cost of around £3,500 to £5,000 per participant would be sustainable.

Reasons for Participating

Participant respondents had become aware of the ADP largely through internal communications. Two of the four respondents had also received a personal approach from their immediate line manager. The reasons for deciding to apply to be put forward for the programme varied. However, all the respondents suggested that they perceived the programme to have an appropriate balance between academic and work-based content. Specifically,

the programme was initially perceived to be of a high degree of relevance to a career in local government. In several cases, respondents clearly identified their reason for participating on the programme with a desire to move beyond their present role. This is significant given some of the findings in relation to impact. Many of the initial group of contacts for the fieldwork had already left their previous post and therefore could not be contacted. While the fieldwork was qualitative in nature and therefore did not involve large numbers of participants the combination of evidence at least suggests that ADP may have appealed to individuals who were keen to progress their career.

Like with many of the other programmes some of the respondents had faced questions about how they would manage their existing workload if they did participate in the ADP, though none suggested that their line managers had presented serious barriers to participation. However, opinion was more mixed on the question of financial support. ADP participation was fully subsidised. Most of the respondents thought that justifying their participation would have, at the least, been more difficult had no subsidy or only part-subsidy been in place.

Experience of participating
All respondents had found the ADP to be enjoyable. They felt that the programme was generally well managed and that all aspects of the course offered some added value. Generally, course tutors on the residential modules were thought to be capable and engaging and the balance between academic and practical content was broadly appreciated.

However, a small number of less positive feedback was received. All respondents noted that they had been confused about the nature of the qualification. Only one respondent had taken the decision to progress with accreditation and several of the others reported that they might have done so had they been notified at the outset that accreditation required additional ongoing course-work. These respondents felt that once they were behind with these projects that they did not feel able to 'catch-up'. There was also some feeling that the group dynamic deteriorated when some participants proceeded to undertake the assignments while others did not. Two respondents also reported that at times the academic and theoretical content was thought to have been given more priority than they would have liked. The time commitment of three day residential was felt by some to be onerous and there was some feeling that two-day units might have been easier to manage. Finally, one respondent reported that the programme was more suited to individuals below her level of seniority and that this had led to her not receiving the benefits that she might otherwise have realised.

Despite these small concerns though, all respondents on balance valued their experience and reported that they would recommend the programme to others, given the qualification regarding the appropriate level of seniority of the participants.

Impact
General
Several evaluations of ADP were conducted for the EO by external consultants. These evaluations were comprehensive in addressing individual development and also triangulated findings between individual beneficiary responses and those of their line managers. However, the evaluations were less detailed in their findings with regard to organisational changes.

Individual
The initial interim evaluation (Denton, 2005) concluded that, on the whole, the right people had participated on ADP. Drawing on responses from the individuals themselves and from their employers, the evaluation concluded that their participation had improved their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The 'Working in a Political Environment' and 'Project Management' modules were thought to have had a particular impact, though participants thought that their leadership and management skills had not been developed as much as they had initially hoped. Employers were generally pleased with the impacts on participants and reported that this had met their expectations, that they would recommend ADP to others and that they thought that roll-out and further funding would help to build capacity in the sector, especially in skill-shortage areas. Where organisational impact was considered, it was generally reported that there would be a beneficial impact on the authority from participation in ADP, particularly as a result of the work-based action learning component. ADP was also thought to improve recruitment retention now, and in the future through growing future leaders.

The final evaluation (Waloff Associates, 2006) found that participants themselves and their employers thought that they had significantly enhanced their skills. This was especially so in regard to management capacities. For instance, 95% of local authority participants reported that individual beneficiaries had become better managers as a result of participation on the ADP. Other areas where beneficiaries were thought to have developed were in project management, procurement, performance management, partnerships, political working and policy development and implementation. Beneficiaries were thought to have improved their understanding of their organisation and to have built new networks and opportunities.

Work with respondents as part of this evaluation largely confirmed the messages of the EO's own evaluation. Several of the respondents had clearly been enthused by their participation on ADP and they reported markedly increased aspirations and confidence as a result. Several, though also reported that they had experienced declining job satisfaction as a result of this combined with the reluctance of superiors to allow them to develop their own roles and responsibilities. As such, several were considering their options and looking to move to other jobs outside their own local authorities, though within the sector. Coupled with the evidence of participants that we were unable to contact, this suggests that the ADP may have had an impact on participants' aspirations that was not matched by the

potential for progression within the hierarchical structures of participants' employers.

There was generally less evidence of participants having learned new skills. Where this was the case this tended to be in relation to project management. However, all the participants reported that they felt that they had refreshed existing skills and realised that they were more capable than they had previously thought. A major individual level impact had clearly been greater political awareness and familiarity with decision and policy making procedures, with all respondents reporting that they were now more aware and comfortable with this, again mirroring the findings of the EO's own evaluation.

Organisational
Evidence of impact at organisational level was less forthcoming, either from the EO's own evaluation or the National Evaluation fieldwork. This was generally hindered by a lack of formal organisational mechanisms for sharing good practice or learning.

Nevertheless there were some instances of individual participants changing their workplace behaviour in ways that had benefited the organisation or implementing new procedures that made a difference. For instance, one individual in particular had made a great many changes to the ways in which performance date was collected and analysed and instituted a number of new department-wide performance reporting procedures.

Policy Linkages
The project was directly influenced by the Pay and Workforce Strategy for local government. Linkages with other policy areas were noted but were not central drivers.

Conclusions
ADP was seen as a valuable experience by participants. They felt that it was well managed and had clearly had a beneficial impact on them as individuals. Some of the problems that arose for the individuals concerned are explicable given the pilot nature of the programme and could have been easily resolved at role out. While the programme had delivered considerable impact at individual level, there was less evidence of organisational change. This might also have been improved at roll-out and the impact may have been improved had the potential link with the NGDP been established. Certainly, it is hard to judge the full potential impact of the ADP without this link having been made.

Bigger questions remain, however, about the sustainability of the programme in the context of removal of the subsidies and its role in relation to the Future Leadership Programme. These issues would have needed to be carefully considered if the programme had been rolled-out. However, these questions are similar to those that might be asked about all the National Programmes, certainly in regard to sustainability. In the event, a decision has already been taken to curtail the programme. In this context, thought will

need to be given to the progression opportunities open to NGDP graduates as they progress their careers in order that the full potential of their contribution is retained within the sector.

LEAP – HR Strategic Coaching Programme

Introduction
The LEAP Strategic Coaching programme is managed by the Employers' Organisation for local government (EO) in partnership with the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and five regional employers' organisations. The LEAP HR Coaching Service for local government was first launched as a pilot programme in Eastern and North West regions in February 2004. Following a successful pilot, Phase 1 of the programme was launched which ran during 2005. Phase 2 comprised two interlinked aspects: training HR and OD professionals to coach individuals; and using these coach trainees to deliver a coaching carried out over a six month period, ending in March 2006 (but in some cases it was spread out over a slightly longer period).

Background
Various studies have shown that there are a number of problems surrounding the HR function within local authorities therefore the LEAP HR Coaching Service is aimed at HR managers. Studies have highlighted the need for HR managers to be able to contribute to their local authority's overall strategic objectives, have the ability to influence senior managers/ chief executives, lift the profile of HR within their local authority and ensure that departments/jobs are configured in the most effective way to maximise efficiency.

Aims and Objectives
The initial 'Activity Brief' (Employers Organisation, 2004b) set out the overall objectives for the LEAP Strategic Coaching Programme as follows:

- Develop and deliver a national development programme for HR managers.
- Enhance the advisory support services available to authorities on strategic HR issues.
- Develop a performance improvement framework for HR managers, services and people management standards

More specifically the end of programme report (Wolfe, H. 2005) stated that LEAP aims to:

- Recognise the unique organisational context within which HR professionals work and help them focus on planning and successfully completing action which will demonstrate strategic value and results orientation.
- Benefit local HR functions as more strategic ways of working are embedded and targets achieved.
- Build personal and professional confidence.

- Accelerate personal development.

Project Delivery

The LEAP HR Coaching Service for local government was first launched as a pilot programme in Eastern and North West regions in February 2004. The purpose of this pilot was to determine whether or not the concept of HR coaching was helpful in a Local Government HR context and if so, to identify any adjustments necessary before full roll-out of the programme.

Phase 1 of the LEAP HR coaching programme involved three HR manager participants per group based in the following EO regions:

- East of England - 1 group
- East Midlands – 3 groups
- London (ALG) – 1 group
- South east – 1 group
- South West – 3 groups

Promotion, application and administration procedures varied by region which in turn may have contributed to differing numbers being involved in each region. With the exception of one group, all contained three participants. In total, 26 participants registered to take part in the programme, of six one-to-one sessions and 360 degree feedback for each participant. The coaching was provided by six IES coaches (Wolfe, H. 2005).

Phase 2 of the LEAP HR coaching programme comprised six two-hour coaching sessions. The time and place of these sessions were mutually agreed between coaches and beneficiaries. Coaching was intended to be carried out over a six-month period, ending in March 2006, but in a number of cases it was spread out over a longer period. The Phase 2 coach training programme was endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and the format was as follows:

- Coaches attended a two-day training event in Manchester in May 2005, in which they were introduced to coaching and developed appropriate skills through presentations and practical exercises.
- In October 2005, coaches attended a one-day training course in London, which included further presentations and practical exercises, sharing of their experiences of coaching to date and training on administering 360 degree feedback for their coaches.
- In January 2006, coaches attended a one-day event in Birmingham, which again included time for coaches to share learning and experiences of coaching, as well as problem shooting for their ongoing coaching sessions and further practical exercises.
- Throughout the coaching programme, coaches were entitled to up to seven hours of contact time with a supervisor.

The EO marketed the LEAP programme in local government and vetted applicants who put themselves forward to be coached. The only specific criterion for the selection of beneficiaries was that they were working in

human resources (HR) or in organisational development (OD). Each beneficiary had a sponsor within their organisation who supported their involvement. The key criteria for the selection included that they were senior managers working in HR or OD and had good psychological understanding of the nature and demands of such roles. A total of 27 people were selected to be coached, although one did not start the programme and another dropped out after two sessions. The remaining 25 were coached by 14 coaches (11 coaching two people each and three coaching one person each). Coaches were allocated beneficiaries on the basis of convenience (i.e. geographical proximity) and some also expressed a preference for being coached by someone they did not know (Gifford, J. 2006).

Reasons for participating

The primary reason for participation in relation to coachees were to assist in the individual participants' own personal development. However, in the case of coaches, they also considered the need for coaching in their own organisation as an additional reason for participating (Gifford, 2006).

Experience of participating

The programme evaluations suggested that the coaching sessions were well received and well organised. Most participants reported that they would both recommend coaching and their own particular coach to others. Participants reported that the experience was challenging and intensive. They also thought that it compared favourably with other training and development options. Well regarded aspects of the process included the strength and confidentiality of the relationship with the coach that helped participants to be open and honest. Less successful elements of the coaching were related to participants feeling that it was too challenging and tiring (Wolfe, 2004). In one case the participant had a coach who they knew and this was felt to have inhibited honesty and openness (Gifford, 2006). At the end of the pilot phase a 360 degree feedback process was introduced and most participants found that this was positive (Wolfe, 2005). Coach training was also on the whole well received with coaches reporting that the training was appropriate to the task and that they had felt supported. However, coaches did report some confusion and dissatisfaction regarding the accreditation of their skills. Many had been under the impression that they were working towards an independent qualification rather than a certificate which was specific to the LEAP programme (Gifford, 2006).

Impact
General

IES conducted the following four evaluation studies of the LEAP Strategic Coaching Programme:

- End of Pilot Report 2004
- Pilot Follow-up Report – August 2005
- Phase 1 End of Programme Report 2005
- An Evaluation of the LEAP Phase 2 Coaching Programme 2006

The 'End of Pilot Report' is based on the questionnaire responses of 20 participants and ten sponsors indicating response rates of 83% and 56% respectively. From the total participant group, four were unavailable for the final questionnaire element of the pilot evaluation. Participants on the LEAP pilot programme were drawn from a range of levels of experience, both within the HR community and in terms of their knowledge and prior exposure to coaching. The purpose of the 'Pilot Follow-up Report' was to further asses the long-term impact of the LEAP programme, a short follow-up questionnaire was sent to all of the pilot group participants and their sponsors. The primary objective of this questionnaire was to look at how the programme had impacted the participants and their organisations since the completion of the programme. The follow-up report is based on the questionnaire responses of four participants and eight sponsors indicating response rates of 16% and 32% respectively. Due to the low levels of response the views are not representative of all participants or sponsors. Phase 1 of the LEAP programme was evaluated using a combination of methodologies including:

- Initial experience questionnaires to participants.
- Evaluation of the coach training, supervision and ongoing development programme.
- End of programme impact questionnaires to participants, coaches and sponsors.

Participants were invited to complete an initial experience questionnaire part way through the programme. Due to later than anticipated starts for some, this came too early, and received a low response rate. The Phase 2 final evaluation was also undertaken by IES and used survey and focus group methodologies.

While these evaluations appear to have been of good quality, there are obvious tensions in the process with the same organisation evaluating and being involved in the delivery of the programme. Nevertheless the evaluations provide strong evidence of the process and impact of the programme, including at individual and organisational levels.

Individual
The primary finding of both the Pilot evaluation mid-point interviews and the end of pilot questionnaires is that the LEAP HR Coaching programme was highly successful in meeting participants' and sponsors needs and expectations. There were very high levels of participant satisfaction from participants regarding what they had achieved through the programme. The evaluation reveals strong belief in the programme processes, delivery and subsequent impacts, as well as support for coaching as a personal development methodology (Wolfe, H. 2004).

The follow-on evaluation found that a high level of satisfaction was expressed by participants, which is encouraging. From the responding participants, three out of four noted that this was their first experience of working with a coach, and all rated their experience of the programme as

either satisfactory or excellent. Personal development assistance was the main objective cited, with one responding participant noting that the programme had been used as support for changing the HR/OD function. All of the participants who responded have stayed in the same post since the completion of the LEAP Pilot programme (Wolfe, H. 2005a).

The findings from the Phase 1 evaluation exercise indicated high levels of satisfaction with the programme at a broad level, and suggested a significant level of confidence in the potential of the programme for many of the participants. The end of programme evaluation is based on the questionnaire responses of 14 participants and 12 sponsors indicating response rates of 54% and 46%, respectively. Overall, Phase 1 of the LEAP programme has received a positive response from both participants and sponsors. Small sample numbers from all responding groups made in-depth analysis inappropriate but the report indicated the programme has been a challenging yet highly effective method of personal and professional development (Wolfe, H. 2005).

The Phase 2 evaluation report highlights that the programme was very successful in providing greater understanding of the coaching relationship and in developing appropriate skills, such as questioning techniques. Nonetheless, coaches felt that in order for its full potential to be realised, the training programme should (a) be accredited by an appropriate recognised qualification or clearly linked to a recognisable coaching qualification and (b) be integrated into the work of local government as part of a long-term coaching strategy (Gifford, J. 2006).

Generally, the evaluations found that coaching had strengthened participants' confidence and management capacities. Participants reported enhanced personal effectiveness and improved insight into the strategic HR management process.

Across the evaluation studies, the findings suggested that participants had enhanced their confidence and personal effectiveness. They had also enhanced their general management capacity, a finding which was confirmed through work with sponsors. Participants who had received coaching were also more self-aware and had increased their leadership skills, for instance by putting more effort into developing and sharing a vision for people management. Hard skills acquisition was less clear, though coachees were thought to be better at planning and developing strategies and managing stakeholder expectations.

Coaches also reported beneficial impacts from the training and coaching experience. They had increased their self-confidence and job satisfaction and felt that they had gained new or strengthened skills in relation to communication and self and time management. Several also thought that they were less stressed and more aspirational as a result.

Organisational

The main organisational impacts highlighted by the evaluations were through the enhanced capacity of the individuals who had received coaching. Since these individuals were in senior positions they were able to influence HR practices across the organisation. Generally, senior managers were thought to be more innovative and effective in leading their team

Policy Linkages

The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy has provided the EO with a strategic overview on how to improve strategic capacity within HR departments at local authorities. The EO has also noted the sustainability agenda and anticipates that the trained coaches from the LEAP programme continue to use the skills gained within their organisations and make it possible for the programme to be self sustainable in the long term. In addition to this linkages were also made with the EO Workforce Remodelling Programmes and the Efficiency Review.

Conclusions

The LEAP programme appears to have been highly beneficial to both coaches and coachees. They programme has established a continuing capacity to provide senior level HR coaching in the sector and is continuing to operate within the IDeA as part of the broader peer-review/support framework. It has thus been very successful in building individual and sectoral capacity. Though links with organisational capacity were less clear, individual participants were senior level and it is therefore to be expected that organisational impacts will flow from the intervention.

National Graduate Development Programme

Introduction

The National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) is a graduate recruitment programme for the local government sector. NGDP aims to draw new talent into the sector. The programme recruits graduates in cohorts of 50, twice a year. Graduates are allocated to local authorities and receive training at national training events.

The NGDP contains four main components:

- **A placement in a host local authority** – this placement lasts two years. The placement involves working in several different parts of the local authority, with the expectation that this will involve work in three key local government functions: strategy, frontline and support services. It is expected that graduates will therefore gain good experience of working across the organisation and with senior level support, allowing them to progress through the organisation quickly in the future.

- **Post Graduate Diploma in Local Government Management** (PGDLGM) – Graduates receive training towards a Post Graduate Diploma at Warwick Business School. The Diploma includes six three-day taught residential units on: governance; policy-making; public finance and budget management; people management; corporate strategy; and project management.
- **National training** – this consists of four residential national training events.

- **External mentoring** – graduates are also supported by a network of senior local government officers who are trained to act as mentors for them. Mentors are expected to assist graduates in motivation and by providing an insight into the operation of the public sector. They also provide guidance and advice on career development and act as a sounding board for ideas.

The application process for graduates has four stages:

- Written application form.
- Telephone interview.
- Assessment centre.
- Interviews with up to three local authorities.

The criteria used in selection are grouped in four main categories of skills and competencies: working with others; motivation; planning and organisation; and persuasive communication and analysis. The applicant's desire to work in the sector is also considered.

Alongside the delivery of the programme, the NGDP has also involved the development of a 'capability tracker' which charts progress of the graduates as they develop their competences.

Background
The rationale for the development of the NGDP was the absence of a recognised sector-wide graduate recruitment programme to compare with the NHS or Civil Service programmes, for example. This was contextualised by evidence-based concerns about the capacity of the sector to recruit and retain highly qualified staff (especially younger staff) to ensure that the local government workforce could be sustained and provide leaders and senior managers in the future from within.

Aims and objectives
The NGDP thus aimed to:

- Develop and deliver a sector-wide graduate recruitment programme.
- "raise the profile of local government as an 'employer of choice', especially among young people but also in the economy as a whole" (Employers Organisation, 2004).

Project delivery

Take-up of the NGDP has generally been good and the programme is well regarded in the sector. It appears to be embedded in the sector and can support in the region of 60-70 starts each year or about 200 participants at any one time.

Several national conferences have been organised at which National Management Trainees and participating local authorities have been able to discuss the ways in which local authorities manage and get the best from the programme and the national management of the NGDP. The NGDP also includes Progress Visits to participating local authorities by Employers Organisation (now IDeA) officials managing the NGDP. These visits include structured 'round table' discussions between National Management Trainees, Placement Coordinators and a range of other internal staff (e.g. Placement Managers, Senior officers and mentors) to discuss progress and any issues arising.

A Capability Tracker has been introduced to track the progress of National Management Trainees against 50 Competencies as they move through their placements and training. The Capability Tracker forms part of the overall assessment process and is the product of a combination of self-assessment and 360 degree feedback.

The external mentoring programme has been awarded the Gold Standard by the International Standards of Mentoring Programmes in Employment (ISMPE). The only other UK public sector organisation to have achieved this award is the Audit Commission.

As a means of sustaining future take-up, especially in the light of changes to the funding of the programme (see below), the NGDP national management have also opened discussions with several Improvement Partnerships. In one Improvement Partnership these discussions have resulted in an agreement with a collection of District Councils to enable them to take a small number of placements. However, there is also some concern that engagement with the Improvement Partnerships will inevitably lead to increased pressure to tailor the NGDP to regional or local needs. There is some resistance to this, stemming from the confidence of the national management that the NGDP is a successful and highly regarded national brand that is able to offer the sector considerable advantages arising from the national – sector-wide – scope to its operations.

There have been a number of changes in the delivery of the programme since its launch, which is largely related to the relationship between central funding and project delivery. While managed in the EO the assumption had been that CBP support was to be used as recurrent revenue income. There was also a difference of opinion with DCLG over the basis of this funding. DCLG had assumed that annual funding was sustaining NGDP starts, but this was in fact supporting participants. A decision has now been made to cease annual funding to the NGDP from CBP with two implications. First, the NGDP will operate in deficit for a period of two years, while current graduate

participants move through the system. Second, the financial management of NGDP needs to be revised and consultants have been appointed to consider the alternative options for funding the programme. One option is for local authorities to make a contribution to each placement graduate beyond their current commitment (i.e. payment of their wages). However, there is some uncertainty about the capacity and willingness of the sector to sustain this level of financial contribution.

Reasons for participating
Individuals
The National Management Trainees saw the opportunity for personal and career development as a major reason for applying for the scheme. Many of the National Management Trainees also clearly wanted to work in the public sector and viewed the NGDP as an attractive alternative to schemes like the Civil Service or NHS Graduate recruitment programmes. The balance of interest in the public sector was broadly in line with the findings of other research commissioned by the EO (Work, 2005), which suggested that only the largest group were interested in working in the public sector in any case. This research also identified two other groups: a slightly smaller group who had become interested in working in the public sector as a result of a bad experience of working in the private sector; and an even smaller group who became interested during the applications process.

The NGDP was thought to offer the advantage of gaining a post-graduate qualification at the same time as gaining experience while working. In this regard, the opportunity to earn a wage whilst participating on the programme and to gain a wide range of experience of different roles and functions within the sector was a major incentive.

Many of the National Management Trainees who were interviewed as part of the research had been working prior to applying to the NGDP. The NGDP was thought to offer the opportunity for career progression that they had not had in their previous positions as well as simply being a means of gaining direct employment in local government.

Research commissioned by the EO suggests that National Management Trainees found out about the NGDP from a number of sources but *the Guardian* was by far the most frequently mentioned (Work, 2005).

Organisations
Local authorities reported various reasons for wanting to participate in the NGDP. These were generally related to the recognition of the need to attract new and different staff and to cope with an ageing workforce or skills gaps. There was also a general recognition that local government is often not seen as an attractive career option. It was not always clear how the authorities became aware of the NGDP but there was generally a reported senior level commitment to the programme and this had typically been the trigger for participation. The subsidy offered in the form of training and development of the graduates was also an attractive incentive for local authorities to

participate in the national scheme rather than simply recruiting autonomously.

Experience of participating
General
Overall, the experience of participating on, and engaging with, the NGDP was thought to be positive, by the National Management Trainees and the participating local authorities alike. Generally, National Management Trainees reported that they would recommend the programme to others and local authorities had already continued to engage with the programme in subsequent cohorts or had taken the decision to do so in the future, even where they did not feel that they had the resources to commit to continuous annual engagement.

Management of the NGDP
The national management of the NGDP in the Employers Organisation was thought to have been effective and helpful to both authorities and to participants themselves:

> *"the Employers Organisation should be singled out for praise for its management of the NGDP". (NGDP Participant, Case Study 3).*

Applications process
The application process was thought by National Management Trainees and authorities to be thorough and rigorous. The process had some clear benefits. These included clarity on the part of the National Management Trainees about the types of skills and competencies desired. Local authorities felt that the rigour of the recruitment process helped them to have confidence in the National Management Trainees that they hosted.

However, the length of time and complexity of the application and selection process also brought drawbacks. Some National Management Trainees felt that it was overly drawn out and there was some evidence of confusion about the final stage in the process – whether this was a job matching process or a further stage in selection. Respondents reported wide variations in the approach of different local authorities to this stage. Some authorities offered candidates a comprehensive introduction to the organisation in the spirit of a two-way matching process while others took a more traditional and limited interview/selection based approach. There was also some concern about the length of time available to the National Management Trainees to prepare for their placement in the local authority and whether this was sufficient to organise issues like relocation.

One authority reported that the selection process did not align with their own recruitment process as a result of a wider organisational commitment to recruiting their own staff according to an equality profile which would result in the authority's workforce being representative of the residents of the area. This had contributed to difficulties in sustaining organisational commitment within the council, though it had been overcome through the use of an

additional stage in the NGDP selection process, where the authority could assert its own equality procedures.

Placements
The process of allocating the National Management Trainees to placements varied between local authorities, with some participants clearly being more involved in decisions about the nature and type of their placements than others. Moreover, some authorities clearly made provision for a larger number of placements than some others.

The National Management Trainees generally enjoyed their placements. They were thought to offer a wide range of experience across the different functions of local authorities and this variety was thought to be beneficial in the initial stages of career development:

> *"the programme provides more experience, I've been working full-time for 2.5 years and now I'm a trainee manager, I wouldn't have been able to do this otherwise [without participating on the NGDP]." (NGDP Participant, Case Study 2).*

However, by their nature, the experience of placements is variable and in some cases individual placements had not been successful in the view of the National Management Trainees. In the small number of cases where this was the case, the main reason cited was that they had not received the required level of support from senior management or the level or type of work given to them was inappropriate.

A key determinant of success for all the placements was the level of senior corporate support and commitment to the graduates. Where this was in place, the National Management Trainees found that they were able to gain the commitment of the departments and teams that they worked within. However, some National Management Trainees reported that they had not received this level of support. It was felt that by some National Management Trainees that the relationship with senior mentors within their host authorities could be usefully formalised in order to overcome variability in the quality and level of senior level support.

One authority reported that they had experienced difficulties in organising placements. One reason for this had been difficulties associated with turning ongoing day-to-day work into delimited and time-bound projects. However, as the authority has gained more experience of engagement with NGDP, generating departmental commitment has become easier. The role of the placement coordinator was also thought to be crucial to gaining wide organisational commitment within the host council.

Post Graduate Diploma
There were some different views about the quality and relevance of the Post Graduate Diploma in Local Government Management. For instance, one respondent reported that the course content was overly theoretical, and lacking in practical relevance. Another minority criticism was a lack of

emphasis on management techniques. However, the majority of respondents who commented on the Post Graduate Diploma were positive about their experience. Some National Management Trainees identified the quality of the staff, facilities and provision at Warwick Business School as a key contributory factor in the success of this element f the programme.

National Training

The experience of National Training was varied between National Management Trainees in different authorities. The National Training events were thought to be useful as a means of establishing and maintaining networks of contacts outside their own host authority. Shared learning and the transfer of ideas and practice from one authority to another were cited as benefits arising from this. However, the benefits of this were greater for National Management Trainees in smaller authorities where they were the sole NGDP participant, contrasting with the experience of trainees hosted by larger authorities where there were internal networks of NGDP participants and substantial scope to learn from within the organisation. Additionally, some National Management Trainees reported that they felt that the material covered during National Training was too introspective and insufficiently focused on teaching them tools and techniques.

External Mentors

The experience of support from external mentors was not widely commented on by National Management Trainees. Where it was mentioned, the experience did not appear to have been positive, though few details were offered in support of this view.

Impact
Individual

Generally, individual National Management Trainees reported beneficial impacts from participation on the NGDP. The programme was thought to offer a very good introduction to local government and helped them to gain skills and experience that would be useful in working in the sector. They also felt that because of their exposure to external mentors, to their wider cohort, their participation on the Post-Graduate Diploma and their experiences of the different placements, they were able to have a broad perspective on the sector and avoid the development of a narrower 'silo-based' mentality.

National Management Trainees reported that they had learned new skills and used them in the workplace, both during their placements and, where relevant, in their subsequent employment. The programme was also flexible enough for individual participants to tailor their work experience to develop new skills in areas where they felt they had weaknesses or to develop existing skills to match a specific future job aspiration. For instance, one respondent noted that they had identified a gap in their experience in terms of people management and through negotiation with their placement coordinator had been able to design a placement to give them team management experience.

The types of skills that National Management Trainees reported having learned included:

- Project and programme management.
- Time management and organisation.
- Report writing.
- Communication and presentation.
- Partnership and external relationship management.
- People management.
- Political influencing.

National Management Trainees also reported that they had experienced increased confidence as a result of participation on the NGDP. However, there were also occasions where participation on the programme had led to the erosion of confidence, for instance when placed in a team with a hostile attitude or where they had taken on work at level higher than their current capability. Nevertheless, the impression given was that where this was the case, the impact was temporary and the net effect of the programme was certainly to increase confidence.

In several authorities, the National Management Trainees felt that they were able to be innovative in the workplace and that the NGDP facilitated this. This was not only by facilitating access to ideas and approaches from outside the authority but also because of their status as 'outsiders' and 'new blood':

> *"We're referred to as new blood and asked to do things with a level of objectivity and challenge. So we tend to challenge the status quo" (NGDP Participant, Case Study 13).*

One respondent reported that they viewed the NGDP selection process as specifically targeting individuals who would challenge existing practices. Another reported that, because he had come from outside the usual recruitment channels which would socialise staff in existing practice before they got to positions where challenging these is possible, his natural disposition was to question why processes or practices were in place rather than to simply accept them.

However, respondents also reported familiar organisational barriers to innovation, such as a culture of doing things in the same way and the need to gain a track record in a particular service area before being able to influence the way that the particular team or department worked.

Most of the respondents interviewed for the research felt that they were satisfied with their choice and work in the sector. However, this line of enquiry is obviously to an extent self-selecting, since those participants who had subsequently left employment in the sector (whether for reasons of dissatisfaction or other) were unavailable for interview. Among those that were available, there was some evidence of National Management Trainees planning careers outside of the sector, though this did not appear to be in any way related to the quality of the programme and might be expected of

any early career recruitment programme. Where information was available about the destinations of participants who had left their host authority, this seemed to indicate that many had gone on to develop careers within the sector at a different authority or had taken up a post in another part of the public sector. At the same time, many of the respondents had progressed to permanent posts within their host authority. Several of these had been promoted also, with one respondent attributing progression heavily to participation on NGDP. Generally, the National Management Trainees indicated that the impact of participation on their career prospects was positive and that they were now more employable than before they entered the programme. One point of caution in terms of employability was highlighted however. At least one National Management Trainee reported that they felt that there were currently only limited opportunities for people with generic skills as opposed to high level technical and service-specific skills. While this may be changing, this respondent felt that without service-specific expertise and qualifications, the opportunities to progress to middle and senior management might be constrained.

The major benefits of the programme in relation to employability as well as general skills acquisition and confidence building appeared to be the mixture between training, gaining a recognised qualification and work experience, particularly when working (as was often the case) on high level and strategically important projects. However, several respondents singled out the opportunity to work with senior level people on high profile projects as allowing them to develop rapidly and to gain confidence at a faster rate than might otherwise have been the case.

Organisational
Generally, both National Management Trainees and senior officers in their host local authorities reported that they were having a positive impact on the organisation, both within the teams and departments where they undertook their placements and, in some cases, across the whole of the authority. The new approach and fresh thinking that the National Management Trainees were able to bring was particularly important here. Engaging with the NGDP appeared to be a signal of intent for some authorities, a statement that they wanted to recruit a different and more varied range of staff, that they were willing to compete for high calibre staff and that they were willing to allow speedier competency based (rather than experience based) progression through the organisation.

Respondents reported that National Management Trainees had worked on projects which had improved important business systems within the council, particularly through their placement project work. For instance, a National Management Trainee placed in the Organisational Development team of one host authority was able to raise significantly the profile of a newly established team, and had been responsible for designing a new Recruitment and Selection Strategy as well as an induction process for elected members, which had previously been absent. In the same authority, a different National Management Trainee had been responsible for developing a CPA modelling process. In another authority, National Management Trainees had helped to

develop the council's performance management system. Again, success in influencing the development of revised business processes was thought to stem from senior level commitment to the programme and willingness to let the National Management Trainees work on high level projects and to support them in doing this.

Engagement with the NGDP had also begun to impact on recruitment and retention difficulties. For instance, NGDP had helped one council from overcoming problems associated with competing for graduates in their own, highly competitive, geographical locale. By accessing a national graduate recruitment market they were able to overcome problems of recruiting locally and thereby access graduates that they may not have been able to do so otherwise.

Here the potential impact was far in excess of the numbers of graduates recruited and subsequently retained through the NGDP. Having National Management Trainees with very little previous service-related experience demonstrated the potential for high skilled individuals to operate in a management capacity without this prior experience. As such, existing experience-based recruitment progression policies were beginning to be questioned. Taken together, these nascent impacts have the potential to radically improve recruitment and retention within local authorities and to help achieve a more balanced age profile for the workforce at the same time. On the other hand authorities were also concerned that the full impact of engagement with the programme could only be gained where the National Management Trainees were retained. Several authorities were considering how they could be more effective at this. For instance, one authority was developing a two-year extension to the NGDP during which National Management Trainees would be allocated to a specific department for the term of the contract but also sponsored to achieve a specific service-related professional qualification.

Authorities reported that engagement with the NGDP had helped the authority to become more innovative, using the National Management Trainees as sources of challenge to existing practices:

> "graduates have been very useful innovators in the council … NGDP encourages networking of the participants, there is a chat room and they network with other people on their cohort as well as other people on the NGDP, the programme wouldn't be half as good if it wasn't a national programme." (Senior Officer, Case Study 2).

Where National Management Trainees had not been able to facilitate organizational change, this appeared to be related to a lack of senior level and organizational commitment to using them to effect change. For instance, several respondents who had been frustrated in their attempts to encourage change felt that the host authority needed to commit more resources to facilitating impact and engage in more evaluation of the effectiveness of placements to encourage learning from both positive and negative experiences.

Cost Effectiveness

Generally, authorities reported that they found participation in the NGDP a very cost effective way of recruiting high calibre staff. They reported salary and on-costs to be in the region of £30,000 per annum and the subsidised training and development offered by the NGDP was thought to be highly beneficial. Some councils, however, reported concerns over the value for money offered by the scheme and others were uncertain about their capacity to cope with increased costs that might result from future funding changes. These are genuine concerns and careful consideration and monitoring will need to be given to the impact on take-up of imminent changes to the funding and subsidy regime. No data was available to judge the cost effectiveness of the scheme in relation to any other similar scheme, principally because no such comparator scheme exists.

Policy linkages

The NGDP was specifically developed in the light of the Pay and Workforce Strategy. The programme is intended to make the sector more attractive as an employer of choice and to provide the sector's workforce with a talented pool of managers from which senior managers of the future can be drawn.

Conclusions

There is evidence to suggest that the NGDP has clearly had a positive impact on the sector. It is well managed with clear purpose and procedures and practices closely linked to this. The programme has received widespread take-up and is embedded in the sector. The initial objective to establish a sector-wide graduate recruitment scheme has been achieved and progress toward raising the profile of the sector as an employer has been achieved.

National Management Trainees felt that they had learned new skills, that these had been relevant to working in local government and that they had been able to apply many of these during their placements in authorities. They felt that both their confidence and their employability had increased and they felt that they were able to innovate in their workplace. Senior officers in local authorities had also recognised the capacity of National Management Trainees to be a source of innovation, new ideas and change within their authorities and had used them to challenge existing ways of working. Local authorities had been able to use National Management Trainees on live projects and they had contributed toward the improvement of business systems. NGDP has also begun to help participating local authorities to improve their recruitment and retention prospects.

However, in places experiences were not always as positive as this and in this relatively small number of cases a number of potential improvements were identified, though it may be the case that some of these have already been addressed through the many comprehensive systems within the programme to deal with problems (such as the Progress Visits and the various structured elements that have been included within these[2]). These include the following:

2 Such as Employer Participation assessments, Capability Tracker reports, Placement Planning Reviews, Progress Visit Summary assessments and Action Plans.

- Streamlining and clarification of the recruitment/selection process – in particular in relation to the final job matching process involving local authorities.
- Placement coordinators may benefit from more support and guidance in ensuring that the authority commits as a whole to making the best use of the National Management Trainees, both in terms of senior/corporate commitment and during placements in teams and departments.
- Further detail and support might be given to ensuring that placements are successful, that project work is of an appropriate nature and where necessary that authorities evaluate these to ensure that they gain the maximum benefit from the process.
- Additional clarity about the nature of the relationship with the external mentor and what National Management Trainees might gain from this.

Again, it is likely that the management of the NGDP has already addressed many of these issues, which are very similar to those raised by a previous report into Alternative Acceptable Approaches to the NGDP, which was commissioned by the EO in March 2005 (Samphire, 2005).

As with other national programmes, the NGDP is entering a period of change during which there may be a tension between the national design of the programme and demands at a regional and local level for specialisation. However, there are clearly positive aspects of the NGDP which derive from the national nature of the programme, such as allowing authorities and graduates alike access to a national labour market. National Management Trainees and authorities also benefit from the cohort contact, national training and the Post-Graduate training and qualification delivered through the national nature of the programme. This is especially beneficial in allowing the NGDP to be a mechanism by which new and different ideas enter participating authorities. This is significant since many respondents cited the impact of the programme on innovation as one of its key benefits.

Workforce Remodelling

Introduction
The Workforce Remodelling project aimed to develop new approaches to managing and developing existing staff, and restructuring the workforce. The project used as a model the example of the changing nature of the school workforce, and in particular the increasing use of teaching assistants. The project aimed to consider existing approaches and to share the learning and good practice from these across the local government sector.

Background
The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury, 2003) identified the need to tackle recruitment and retention problems in the children's workforce through breaking down barriers between professional disciplines. The Green paper identified the need to make working with children an attractive and high-status career. Initial research by the EO suggested that similar problems were being faced across local government service areas and that

"remodelling activity and advice is required to take account of the changing nature of work in local government" (EO, 2004). In particular, the project aimed to consider the lessons learned from remodelling activities in the schools workforce and to generalize these across the sector.

Aims and objectives

In line with the aims of the Pay and Workforce Strategy for Local Government, the remodelling project was intended to:

- develop guidance and a good practice database based on existing activities in local government and the wider public sector, including a generic web-based remodelling toolkit;
- provide ongoing support for remodelling of jobs across local government;
- demonstrate the advantages of remodelling in tackling skills shortages, developing staff potential and allowing key staff to focus skills on key duties.

Project delivery

The project had initially aimed to identify and publicise examples of successful remodelling and developing a national remodelling action plan. This was quite quickly scaled down to the production of an online toolkit for remodelling, which has now been published.

The toolkit has twelve stages to it from establishing what the authority wants to achieve, through project management techniques to employee consultation and implementing solutions. The toolkit is designed to help officers faced with the prospect of undertaking workforce remodelling, giving structure to the process. However, the delivery of outcomes and impact on the sector was not fully thought out at the beginning of the programme, and no resource was budgeted into the project for marketing or monitoring take-up and impact.

Impact

It was not possible to assess impact as no monitoring of take-up has been undertaken and no budget has been devoted to marketing and promotion. However, it is clear that the toolkit is potentially valuable, although the lack of funding for marketing and promotion as well as monitoring has significantly constrained the potential impact of the project.

Policy linkages

The project had clear linkages to several wider policy areas, most notably the Pay and Workforce Strategy.

Conclusions

The Workforce Remodelling project was clearly in line with the initial thinking behind the CBP, and could have played a much more prominent role in helping local authorities to develop new ways of using existing resources. However, insufficient planning and poor initial project management meant that the project could not realise the potential benefits. There is insufficient evidence available to draw on to document the impact

of the project in the sector. That said, the toolkit is available on-line and could still be promoted through the Regional Improvement Partnerships.

Diversity in Districts

Introduction

Diversity in Districts was a three-year project aimed at improving the diversity of local authorities' workforces, and was aimed particularly at improving performance on the Equality Standard. The project was framed against the known problems facing many local authorities, particularly in relation to the scale of resources available to small District Councils regardless of their often large, diverse and scattered populations.

Background

The background to the programme was the realisation that there were approximately 100 local authorities rated as 'Poor', 'Weak' or 'Fair' at CPA which had either not adopted the Equality Standard for local government or were only at level 1 of the standard. At the same time, the Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy (PWS) document identified equality and diversity as a cross-cutting issue for local government. There was also an assumption that low performing local authorities are less likely to have the capacity to mainstream diversity into their performance management and corporate procedures. While they are assumed to be able to recognise and diagnose problems, it is acknowledged that they are likely to experience difficulties in accessing the additional support necessary to make the required changes.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the project was to enhance the capacity of small authorities to deliver on equality issues through identifying ways of learning from one another, using a variety of approaches, including using case studies and the strengthening of regional networks. The overall objective was to:

"To enable small authorities to reach level one or two of the Equality Standard." (Employers Organisation for Local Government, 2004d).

The project aimed to work with 20 district councils from across the CPA spectrum in the first year, and a further 30 in year two.

Project Delivery

All Fair, Poor and Weak Districts who had either not adopted the Equality Standard or were only at level one were invited to apply to access the support available. In phase 1, all authorities' engagement with the programme were to be fully subsidized with Capacity Building Programme money. In phase 2, a 50% subsidy from the Capacity Building Programme was effective.

Take-up in phase 1 proved to be disappointing with only ten authorities signing-up to the programme. The Employers Organisation identified the following reasons for poor take-up:

- Poorly performing authorities were thought likely to lack confidence in opening themselves up to the potential criticism that might come from the diagnostic activities.
- Some authorities were thought to lack commitment at senior level. Getting senior level commitment was seen as a key determinant and a useful tool in achieving this was thought to be some form of external pressure on the senior levels of the organization.

As a result, changes were put in place for phase 2. For instance, there was more targeted marketing, Regional Directors of Practice were used as entrees and the positive feedback from Phase 1 was used to advertise the potential benefits. Take-up for phase 2 proved to be much better, despite the lower level of subsidy, with 27 authorities coming forward.

Capacity Building Programme funding has now come to an end, and the project will cease after the completion of evaluation activities. However, findings and knowledge from the Pilot is being used in the development of IDeA programmes (the Diversity in Districts team is now within the IDeA).

The programme involved several stages. An initial scoping phase included the arrangement of a series of focus groups to identify the types of problems faced by local authorities in mainstreaming diversity and adopting the Equality standard. This was then used to develop diagnostic tools. Each authority then received 5 days of consultancy support on a fully subsidised basis. More consultancy support was subsequently available on a 50% subsidy basis. Finally, the programme was intended to develop a network of officers across different organisations to continue equalities work in the future. The final evaluation of the project was intended to identify good practice for other local authorities.

Reasons for Participating
Only one case study authority included in this evaluation had participated in the Diversity in Districts programme, having been invited to participate through a letter to the Chief Executive, to participate. The council was eligible as a result of being defined as weak at CPA and at the time were at level 1 of the equality standard. Respondents felt that there was an assumption that weak authorities performed poorly in all areas, but that in fact equalities were not weak in this council.

Experience of participating
The council used the available consultancy time to focus on existing weaknesses and in providing direction for future work. Three of the twelve days were focused on dialogue with staff, while the other days included training meetings, compiling reports, and discussions about how to take forward and mainstream equalities issues. Respondents thought that participation in the programme had helped to ensure that equalities work

maintained a high profile, and provided an opportunity to review progress and identify the barriers to achieving Level 2. External validation of the council's work was also appreciated.

> *"I don't know how else we could've achieved what we have. It has been important to raise profile of equalities to the corporate agenda. Probably wouldn't have recognized without an objective view how far down the path we are. External help has been really helpful in getting us to think beyond the day job which isn't easy in a weak LA." (Diversity in Districts Participant, Case Study 11).*

> *"the equalities process is one you learn, it is difficult to know if you are doing it right as it is new for everyone therefore it is useful to have an external person to say we are having the same struggle as other local authorities." (Diversity in Districts Participant, Case Study 11).*

Some respondents felt the programme could have been longer, and would have benefited from having more funding. While participants felt the process was particularly useful in their Council (because the authority had identified what they wanted achieve), they felt the programme would be of less use to other authorities if they were not aware of their own equality objectives.

Many of the respondents admitted to questioning the value of the programme at the outset because other local authorities involved in the programme did not have an equalities officer or had not even reached the first level of the equalities standard, so officers felt they were further ahead the equalities agenda than most councils on the programme. However, participants were reassured the programme would be tailor-made to what the authority needed. Respondents thought that the use of an officer from Dialogue who had previously worked in the Council was beneficial.

Impact
Individual
The most valuable impact identified by respondents was an increase in equalities officers' confidence due to having external help. This external validation highlighting that the authority was in a position to progress to the next equalities level was a huge boost for staff. The training received gave officers more confidence that the authority was moving in the right direction, something which respondents found more useful than talking to other authorities who tended not to be at the same level. Officers also developed their skills in developing and implementing equal opportunities policies.

Organisational
Of the ten authorities involved in phase one of the programme, all but one is now at Level 1 or above in the Equality Standard and all have shown progress on the Standard during the period of their participation. The authority involved in our case study fieldwork was already at Level 1 and has since progressed to Level 2 with some of the respondents interviewed for our research indicating that some of this progress was at least facilitated by

participation on the programme. Engagement with the programme had helped to raise the profile of work to implement the standard and had helped to generate staff commitment to progress.

Policy Linkages
Diversity in Districts is linked to the equalities elements of the Pay and Workforce strategy as well as, more indirectly, to recruitment and retention issues identified in the strategy. It is also clearly linked to the wider equalities policy agenda.

Conclusions
Diversity in Districts was not well taken up as a national programme and has thus failed to have a wide impact in the sector. However, within its own terms it appears to have been successful in helping to assist those councils that have participated in the programme to improve in terms of the local government equality standard.

Skills Pathways

Introduction
The Skills Pathways programme involved the development of generic skills pathways (defined as routes of career progression within a particular occupation), as well as facilitating seven demonstration projects. The project began with in-depth research about the skills needs of the local government sector, identifying the specifics of skill shortages in occupations where these recruitment and retention problems had been reported. Partnerships of authorities were then asked to submit proposals to develop projects in each of five skills shortage areas:

- Social care.
- Occupational therapy.
- Public protection (Environmental health and trading standards).
- Town planning.
- Transport planners/officers.
- New and changing services (registrars and teaching assistants).

One regional or sub-regional partnership was chosen to host a demonstration project in each of these occupational areas. The demonstration projects were intended in their first phase to tackle a national skills shortage in a local context before, in the second phase, considering how the lessons learned could be generalised for regional or national consumption.

The generic skills pathways model developed via the project has six stages of development (see Figure 1). In each of these, the generic model suggests that there are five factors to consider: jobs and tasks involved; skills and knowledge needed; behaviours expected; the qualifications which reflect these and where they sit in the national qualifications framework (i.e. NVQ Level 1, 2, 3, 4 or equivalent); and the pay and grading processes which

operate. The key advantage of the skills pathways approach is to be able to clearly show the route of progression between and within each of the six stages of development.

Figure 1: The Skills Pathways model
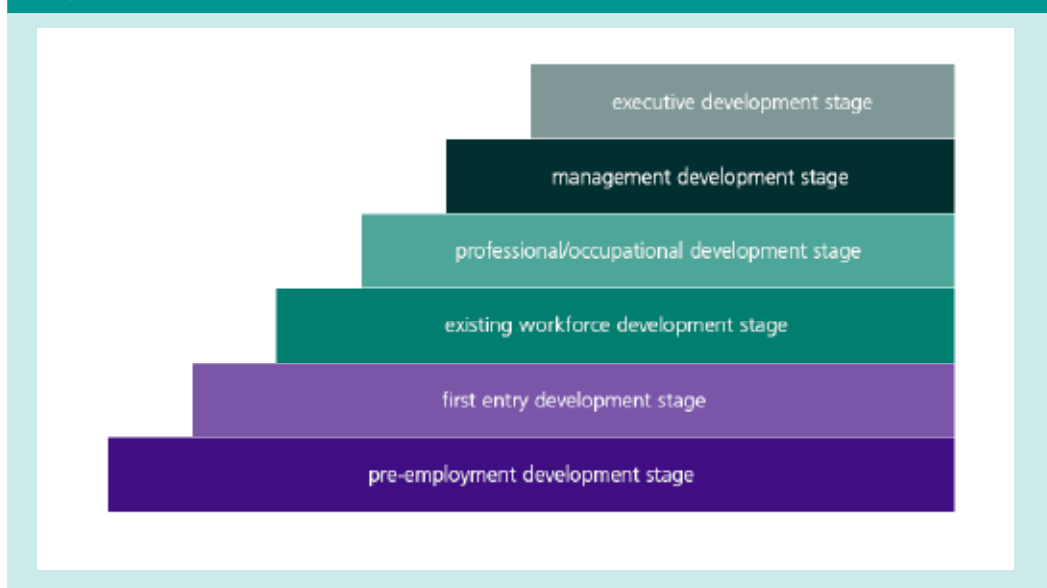
Employers Organisation 2004f:10.

Background

The background for the project was set by a number of contextual features. Local authorities were reporting major skills shortages in specific occupational areas. This was reflected in the Pay and Workforce Strategy, which focused on the need to improve the quality of the workforce. Skills pathways were intended to increase the capacity of the sector to develop its workforce, improving the quality of service delivery and tackling specific skills shortages at the same time.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the project was to develop a series of six generic skills pathways in each of the six skill shortage areas. The specific benefits of this were identified as:

- Widening the skills base of existing employees;
- Increasing the flexibility of the workforce and the willingness to change;
- Developing the future workforce;
- Reducing recruitment costs now and in the future;
- Retaining talented employees;
- Improving social inclusion through employment practices and through the use of 'pre-employment' phase;
- Becoming an employer of choice.

Project delivery

The project encountered some difficulties during its development. For instance, due to limits on the amount of funding available, the programme

could not offer significant financial incentives to participating authorities, which meant that sustaining their commitment to the development of national projects was sometimes challenging. This was especially so given the partnership nature of the demonstration projects.

Reasons for participating

The reasons for participating on the part of individual local authorities were directly related to existing work priorities, such as filling an existing skills gap. For instance, the demonstration project in West Yorkshire is developing a sustainable recruitment and progression system for Building Control Officers in the sub-region. The project was of particular relevance to the co-ordinating authority – Kirklees MC – where it had been noted that the entire Building Control team was about to become eligible for retirement.

Impact

Measurement of impact had proven difficult because the demonstration projects were concerned with developing systems and processes rather than specific measurable outputs. Moreover, in all cases the CBP resources only part-funded the work of the partnerships and the work of the EO in supporting them. In light of this, it is difficult to attribute direct impacts associated with CBP support alone. However, it was felt that by the management of the national programme that the project had achieved some success in changing the approaches of the authorities concerned and in establishing infrastructure.

Policy linkages

The main policy linkages for the Skills Pathways project are with the Pay and Workforce Strategy and the efficiency agenda.

Public Protection Programme

Introduction

The Employers Organisation (EO) coordinated the Public Protection Recruitment Programme on behalf of the Performance Partnership (LACORS, EO, IDeA, and 4Ps) in conjunction with the professional institutes for Trading Standards and Environmental Health (TSI and CIEH). The fundamental objective of the programme was to help address major recruitment issues affecting Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standards Officers in local government. Initially, funding for this programme was secured for a period of one year only (2004/2005); however, this was extended for another year and ended in March 2006. A steering group (consisting of representatives from the EO, LACORS, CIEH, TSI and ODPM) was set up to oversee the funding and evaluation of the project.

Background

The EO has for many years raised concern about the effects of demographic changes on the number of people in differing age bands entering and leaving the local government workforce. With an ageing population, proportionally fewer younger people are entering the workforce than ever

before. Though proposed changes to pension entitlement may lead to more people in the over 50 age group remaining in the workplace for longer than in recent years, it is anticipated that there will still be strong competition from employers in all sectors competing for the available workforce.

Successive EO surveys[3] have identified skills shortages in a number of service areas. Part of the three-year pay deal signed in 2003 set targets for local authorities to ensure they had a pay and workforce plan in place by the date of the final stage of the pay element of the deal – April 2006. This strategy will not directly reduce the shortfall in numbers of people entering regulatory services, but it does put the onus on authorities to plan for the future and address skills shortages and contingencies before they become a problem.

One area of concern covers the regulatory service areas, and particularly environmental health and trading standards. These service areas provide public protection services and the implications both locally and nationally of a skills shortage in this area can have far reaching effects. Research carried out by the EO, LACORS, CIEH, TSI and the Local Government Association (LGA) identified that local authorities were having difficulty recruiting suitably qualified people to train and work as Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standards Officers. Falling staff numbers in the public protection area has significant impact not just on service delivery, but on the way the country provides protection in many aspects of life and business. The most noticeable implications could include reductions in inspections and prosecutions resulting in increases in risk and injury, a danger to public health, and even – in extreme cases – serious injury and loss of life.

Regulatory services are essential to ensure the public are protected. The Audit Commission has expressed concern about the falling numbers of trading standards officers in particular. The recent Hampton review suggested that options open to central government included a lighter touch on business inspections and potential transfer of this responsibility to other agencies. Local government's view is that this would potentially result in the loss of local knowledge, experience, and local decision-making and local political control. The EO, LACORS, TSI. IDeA, CIEH and the LGA formed the Regulatory Services Partnership to address the problem of recruitment. The partnership looked at evidence pointing to problems around recruiting people to train as environmental health officers and trading standards officers. They also looked at options around recruiting, training and retaining these groups, and also how they could continue to promote the service as a career choice. In 2004, a proposal was submitted by the EO on behalf of the Partnership to the ODPM to secure £1m of CBP Funds to deliver targeted initiatives to address the recognised shortfall in the number of people joining and remaining within the regulatory services areas of trading standards and environmental health (Employers' Organisation, 2006).

3 (see http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk/conditions/surveys/index.html)

Aims and Objectives

The fundamental objective of this activity was to help address major recruitment issues affecting Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standards Officers in local government.

Project Delivery

The Public Protection Programme was made available to support local authorities to deliver practical training placements and/or to create opportunities for Environmental Health and Trading Standards trainees. Funding was available if submissions demonstrated evidence of 'additionally', that is to say that the activity would increase the number of trainees entering, or likely to enter, the profession above that which would normally occur. It could also be used to enable added value or improved quality of the training provision. Submissions from local authorities had to demonstrate evidence of partnership working (for example with a university, between departments or joint-working with other local authorities) and a commitment to continue investment in training and development beyond 2004/5.

The Environmental Health Practical Training Placement funding intended to enhance existing provision for students to complete their work-based learning placements. The £5,000 match-funded grants were intended to encourage authorities to offer funded placements to students on CIEH accredited courses.

The Trading Standards Practical Training Placement funding could be used in a variety of ways to support the training and development of Trading Standards trainees. A list of examples includes:

- Undergraduate Sponsorship - the grant could be used to provide sponsorship for an undergraduate currently on an accredited university course, in order to fund work-based training/experience within a local authority via a temporary contract of employment. This could be operated in the following ways:
  - Year 2 students. £5,000 grant for 2004/5 and £5,000 local authority contribution for 2005/6 leading to graduation.
  - Year 3 students. £5,000 grant in 2004/5 for final year to fund work-based/experience/employment with the local authority and £5,000 match funding (2005/6) towards employment as a trainee after graduation.

Submissions in respect of the above should be supported by a formal sponsorship agreement.

- Part-time Employment of Undergraduates - The £5,000 grant could be used to fund work experience or part-time employment of an undergraduate. Mature students in particular may be able to take on part-time employment with a local authority (for example, employment for 10 hours per week (scale 3) at a cost of £5,000 per annum). The agreement could cover a fixed-term contract for two years supported by £5,000 grant for 2004/5 followed by £5,000 local authority contribution in 2005/6. Submissions of this type should be supported by a two-year agreement to formalise the match funding elements.
- Trainees - Practical Training Placement funding could be used to enable local authorities to recruit additional trainees. A £5,000 grant would be made towards their work-based training (including APEL) for 2004/5, matched by a local authority contribution, which may be 'in kind'. The grant could also be used to match-fund improvements in the quality/ quantity of training to earning trainees, particularly if organised on a regional or cross-authority basis.
- Bursaries - Up to £5,000 would be payable to support a bursary scheme payable to students who enrol on accredited degrees or law degrees and formally agree to undertake work-based practical training activities with a local authority. Any payments would have to be match-funded by the local authority either in 2004/5 or as an extension of the bursary scheme into year 2 (year 2 being wholly funded by the local authority). This option had the advantage of including students across England rather than concentrating on local authorities close to Trading Standards accredited universities.

Both TSI and CIEH were contracted by the EO to develop e-tools to promote career opportunities within their professions by the end of March 2005. Websites[4] were developed (TSI) and enhanced (CIEH) to provide advice and information. In addition, multi-media presentations were developed to interest young people in a career in the two professions and delivered in schools and colleges by trained practitioners.

Reasons for Participating
Authorities generally participated in the programme as a result of facing shortages of Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers. For instance, one authority had been attempting to fill a vacancy for an Environmental Health Officer for two years. Another authority reported that they were more acutely impacted on by national shortages in Trading Standards Officers because of the relatively high local house prices. Respondents at the authority suggested that the cause of national Environmental Health Officer shortages was due to the lack of one-year sandwich placements in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Authorities used the programme to fill skills gaps in their organisation in a variety of ways. For instance, some had chosen to fund undergraduate placements. In these cases, authorities saw participation on the programme as a means of both gaining access to additional staff resource in the short term and reducing recruitment costs in the future. Other authorities had

4 Websites can be accessed via www.TScareers.org.uk and www.EHcareers.org (Employers Organisation, 2004c)

used the funding to train existing staff to a higher level to allow them to become Trading Standards Officers:

> *"CBP money has helped the budget as training is expensive, the money was purely to help with officers' training not contribute to salary. Nationally there is a deficiency in trading standards officers therefore it was an excellent opportunity sought by the chief executive" (Public Protection Participant, Case Study 13).*

Authorities became aware of the programme in a variety of ways. For instance, one authority was made aware of the programme through marketing material distributed by the Employers' Organisation. Another found out about the programme through attendance at a local networking event for Environmental Health Officers. Another was alerted to the programme by information from the professional bodies such as the TSI and CIEH.

Student participants had become aware of the programme through material available at their host HEI, having discussed various placement options with HEI staff and being assisted in the applications process by them. Students saw the potential to find permanent employment with their host council at the end of their studies an added incentive to participate.

Experience of Participating
Generally, individual participants thought that the programme allowed them to gain valuable work experience. They didn't identify any major barriers to participation and were happy with the organisation of the programme. Among those that commented on it, authorities thought that the application process was straightforward and easy to understand.

Authorities reported some difficulties in participating, especially where they were using funding to train their own staff. This presented challenges, for instance, in releasing staff to undertake training, which was often difficult to schedule around other work commitments of the team. One authority also experienced difficulty in identifying match funding and in trying to recruit a Trainee Environmental Health Officer, though the EO and DCLG have helped to mitigate the potential impacts of this by agreeing to transfer the money between financial years. Another authority had difficulty in identifying a source of funding for a second year of training for a Trading Standards Officer, where the first year had been funded by the Public Protection programme.

Several authorities confirmed that the funds received from the Public Protection programme, though small, had allowed training and recruitment activity to take place that would have otherwise not have occurred. However, one council also noted that the programme's funding cycle is not aligned with the council's planning process. Students on their placement now (and for whom funding is currently being made available by the EO) were recruited at the end of their first year of studies, around Easter 2004. Thus, the council's ongoing commitment to the programme is somewhat

complicated, as funding for any students recruited now will not be forthcoming for eighteen months (i.e. starting their placements in September 2007); given that the council is unsure about the future funding of the programme, this is likely to make more demands on their resources than is currently the case.

Impact

The EO steering group carried out an evaluation of the Public Protection Programme. The key findings from the evaluation (Employers Organisation, 2006) follow:

- The Public Protection Programme has raised the profile of the regulatory services.
- More students will gain the necessary experience and opportunities to learn and progress to qualified status based on the opportunity offered by the funding.
- Authorities have looked at both new entrants and experienced officers to benefit form the additional resources.
- Matched funding was provided either in direct financial resources or additional officer time and opportunities provided to use equipment or gain experiences via neighbouring authorities or other partners.
- New ideas have been put to the test in terms of training development and challenges to current training routes are being debated.
- Internal and external partners are working together to identify the best ways to enhance understanding of the roles and collaborating on how best to deliver services with limited resources.
- The CBP funding has meant that some authorities are now able to offer placements they would not have been able to prior to the scheme launch.
- Authorities who were previously offering placements have been able to take an additional placement or redirect their financial resources to other areas of need in the training of regulatory services staff.
- Discussions about how to recruit, train and retain both EHOs and TSOs are taking place in authorities across the country.
- Discussions about how to deliver the services with part and non-qualified staff taking a more direct role and gaining further experience continue.
- However, some areas for improvement in practice were identified:
  - There was little evidence of taking year 10 and 11 students into authorities to gain experience and potentially shape a career in the regulatory services.
  - There was no direct evidence of authorities having used equality legislation to promote the training and development of women, people from minority ethnic groups or disabled people.
  - There were some examples of authorities looking at different terms and conditions of officers in terms of recruitment and retention initiatives but these were not fully explored.
  - In many cases the regulatory service providers will have to negotiate with peers within their authorities to receive additional funding to continue the foundation that the CBF has laid.

The case study work as part of the national evaluation considered impacts at both individual and organisational levels. The results of this are summarised below.

Individual

Generally[5], individuals who had received work placements or had undergone training with the support of the Public Protection programme identified themselves as having benefited from the opportunity. Participants and their managers reported that they had learned new skills that they had been able to apply in the workplace, albeit for many within their placement settings. Examples of the types of skills that beneficiaries had gained include project and time management, record keeping, customer and client relationship management.

Individual beneficiaries had also increased in confidence as a result of participation on the programme. This was particularly manifest for some respondents in their confidence in dealing with service users and clients. Individual beneficiaries also felt more confident as a result of the way in which their work was managed and feeling that they had appropriate support and supervision.

Students who had undertaken work placements confirmed that they felt their participation in the scheme would make a lasting contribution to their personal and career development. As well as having gained extra skills and experience in a 'real working environment', they also believe that the opportunity to secure a permanent post with the Council on completion of their studies is a major advantage of participating in the programme.

Both students and existing Trading Standards / Environmental Health staff had been allowed to develop through their participation in the Public Protection Programme. This had enhanced their career prospects, in some cases leading either to permanent employment or to promotion, and had impacted positively on their job satisfaction.

Organisational

Impacts at the organisational level were less dramatic than for some other National Programmes, although this might be expected, given the relatively small amount of CBP resource involved. Those organisations that did report organisational impacts suggested that these were largely around giving them access to additional staff resources, even if on a temporary basis. In addition, several thought that engagement in the programme had improved their recruitment and retention position and one reported that the ability to recruit a previous placement student on a permanent basis would reduce their recruitment costs in the future. Finally, one authority identified impacts on their performance against Best Value Performance Indicators as a result of having additional staff resource to target on specific projects. However, despite these general impacts, one authority had lost a member of staff who had gained a higher level of qualification through participation in the Public

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5 Fieldwork in one authority was unable to consider impacts, as delays in the recruitment process had meant that there had been little scope for impact to have occurred.

Protection programme. While this was a loss of capacity for this authority, the individual had moved to a higher paid position in another local authority meaning that the impact was still to contribute to capacity in the sector overall.

Cost Effectiveness

Generally, access to the funding had allowed training or work placements to take place that would otherwise not have happened. Respondents were generally happy with the level of resource received, though several authorities would clearly have benefited more from additional resource. The CBP resource, had, in several cases, enabled participating Environmental Health and Trading Standards services to lever-in additional resources from their authorities and thus was able to generate additional investment in public protection resources beyond the level of central funding channelled through the programme. However, no comparison was available with any alternative mechanisms of funding this investment to be able to judge cost effectiveness.

Policy Linkages

The EO has continued to promote local government as a career choice with different age groups and has specifically addressed career opportunities for women, people from minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities, attempting to open all access routes for all groups. The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy provided the EO with a strategic overview on human capacity issues. In relation to the sustainability agenda a condition attached to the funding for local authorities specified a need for a commitment from local authorities beyond the funding period.

Trading Standards and Environmental Health are central to local authority corporate performance, which has been demonstrated by the contribution made to the Shared Priorities agreed between central and local government. Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standards Officers have made a significant contribution to these shared priorities by contributing directly to their authorities PSA targets.

Conclusions

The Public Protection programme has achieved its aims of contributing toward addressing the recruitment and retention of Trading Standards and Environmental Health Officers. Given the scale of the programme the contribution toward tackling this problem was always going to be limited. However, authorities have been able to take placements where they would otherwise not have done so, or to expand existing placements. They have also been able to train existing staff to take up different roles to resolve skills shortages.

Peer Clearing House

Introduction

The Peer Clearing House for local government was set up to recruit, accredit and place peers. It is hosted by the IDeA and facilitates the brokerage of peers for both the IDeA and non-IDeA improvement projects in the local government sector. The Peer Clearing House was established in April 2003 to formalise the exchange of local government peers throughout the country and to manage the recruitment, accreditation, placement and development of peers.

Background

The Peer Clearing House is hosted by IDeA in recognition of its extensive experience of delivering improvement through peers. This arrangement followed discussions with IDeA, ODPM and LGA towards the end of 2002 when funding was approved from the Capacity Building Fund to recruit a central team with responsibility to co-ordinate peer involvement in improvement programmes across the local government sector. There is a dedicated team of Peer Clearing House staff responsible for the recruitment, development, accreditation, placement and engagement of peers (IDeA, 2003).

Aims and Objectives

The Peer Clearing House aims to provide a mechanism for sharing good practice within the local government sector itself. Through the recruitment, accreditation and placement process the Peer Clearing House aimed to establish a pool of member and officer peers.

Project Delivery

The Peer Clearing House recruits, accredits and places peers; a peer is typically a senior local government officer or councillor with the proven ability to help bring about improvements in local government. The Peer Clearing House core activities include developing the market for peers and managing all aspects of the peer engagement process from sourcing them through to the evaluation of their performance. Peers support a wide range of improvement initiatives across local government by working with councils and other government organisations. Their work involves both strategic leadership and pragmatic action plans to help facilitate change and improvement (case study examples of the work that peers undertake are available in the Peer Clearing House brochures entitled 'why should I become a local government peer?' and 'tap into the energy of the Peer Clearing House').

Anyone who holds a senior position within local government can apply to become a peer and successful applicants are accredited following their satisfactory completion of the accreditation process. The benefits of being a peer include extending personal and professional knowledge and experience, learning lessons that may be applied to the peer's own workplace, gaining additional contacts and forging new relationships. Special incentive payments are available to councils who make available officer peers to weak

and poor councils. The accreditation process for peers involves application forms, references, interactive exercises, simulations and written tasks. Specially trained assessors assess officer and member applicants against defined peer competencies at an Accreditation Centre. All successful delegates are registered on the Peer Clearing House database (IDeA, 2006).

The programme manager at the IDeA stated that the *"programme has been very successful so far because peers bring a level of confidence to Local Authorities, however an ongoing barrier is continuing to find sufficiently good peers as there are a limited number of people who are actually capable of doing the job".*

Impact
All peers and associates are evaluated following their work. This enables the Peer Clearing House to build up detailed information about their particular skills, strengths and weaknesses. This helps to ensure that the most suitable individuals are assigned to projects and means that any issues raised during the course of an assignment are immediately addressed. The project/ assignment manager is responsible for completing and submitting an evaluation form to the Peer Clearing House at the end of a project or at the end of a peer's contracted involvement in a project. Project/assignment managers are also required to provide feedback to the peer/associate in cases where there is a particular issue that might affect future placements.

Policy Linkages
The Peer Clearing House programme has been influenced by the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) regime for local authorities, a particular endeavour is made to work with 'weak' and 'poor' rated Local Authorities and focus on improvements. No other specific policy linkages were identified as central drivers or influential to this improvement programme.

Conclusions
The Peer Clearing House has been successful in establishing the infrastructure to support the exchange of expertise through officer and member peer placements and mentoring. It has now been utilised by at least two other National Programmes (the Councillor Mentoring programme and Leadership Centre) and is becoming embedded in the sector. It has involved innovative work to develop development and competency frameworks for elected members and has thus contributes to the development of the sector as a whole.

Leadership Academy

Introduction
The Leadership Academy is hosted by the IDeA and was designed to meet the needs of councillors in local government. The Academy aims to develop the capacity of elected members to learn leadership skills and from the experiences of other elected members in a cross party environment. It is also intended to facilitate the development of networks and contacts.

Background

The role of elected members, cabinet members and leaders had changed dramatically over the last decade and local council elections have seen substantial changes in the elected leadership of many councils, meaning that many councillors have not got a depth of past experience to rely on. Coupled with a fast changing policy environment and a perceived culture of resistance to change in some councils, the Leadership Academy reflects the perceived need to train elected members to understand and work effectively in local government.

Aims and Objectives

The programme is designed specifically with councillors and their broad experience of education in mind, so teaching encompasses a range of styles and methods of delivery. The main objective of the programme is to *"develop participants' leadership style, give them confidence and create a support network among peers in other councils and parties"*[6].

Project Delivery

The Leadership Academy took place in three core modules of two days each, with an optional fourth module if participants wanted to look at any of the issues more deeply. Each module considers a different aspect of leadership and is led by tutors, with an intimate knowledge of their subject. Typically the classes were small with no more than 24 councillors on each course, allowing a high level of participation and discussion drawing on case studies and practical exercises. The cost of the course is £1,400 (plus VAT) for modules 1, 2 and 3. The modules are described in Table 11.

Table 11: Module content in the Leadership Academy		
Module	**Course Content**	**Delivery Organisation**
Module 1	The first module focuses on personal leadership. The aim of this module is to encourage councillors to look at what kind of leader they are, and how this affects the way they make decisions, delegate responsibility and empower their colleagues.	Andy Holder Associates
Module 2	Module 2 looks at political leadership in a participative programme that explores the theoretical and practical aspects of political and organisational leadership.	Local Government Centre, Warwick Business School and the Institute for Political and Economic Governance (IPEG)

6 http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=1700429

Table 11: Module content in the Leadership Academy		
Module 3	Module 3 explores community leadership and cohesion, and how councillors can make the most of their relationships with community leaders to make sure the community is properly involved in council plans.	Office for Public Management
Module 4	The fourth module is optional and its content and structure are designed to meet participants' preferences.	Depends on subject chosen by participants

In addition to the modular programme described in the above table the following streams are available on the Leadership Academy:

- The first is a 'Fastrack' Programme for councillors under the age of 35 who have the talent, commitment and desire to be the leaders of the future, which is supported by the National Young Councillors' Forum. It contains the same modules as the Leadership Academy but in a different style specifically to suit the needs of young councillors.
- 'Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority' councillors have the option of this dedicated Leadership Academy programme, addressing issues that may prevent them from progressing to leading roles. As well as covering the main Leadership Academy agenda, participants also look at subjects such as institutional and personal racism, cultural differences and the obstacles to leadership that stand in their way.
- 'Making Children Matter' covers a number of issues which will help councillors set the strategic direction of their council's priorities for the local community.

Focused programmes are also available which offer councillors a stand-alone opportunity to concentrate on a particular theme. Focused programmes are single modules, those currently available include:

- Community safety
- Overview and scrutiny chairs programme
- Finance and efficiency
- Neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion
- Planning as a strategic tool
- Community cohesion
- Leadership academy – summer schools
- Graduate summer school
- Open summer school

The Leadership Academy is aimed at leaders of councils; leaders of political groups; executive and scrutiny committee members; portfolio holders; scrutiny chairs; and opposition spokespeople. It was acceptable for local authorities to block-book a number of councillors at once, but only one was allowed to attend each programme. Programmes were cross-party and restricted to 24 members at any one session, to ensure maximum participation (IDeA, 2005).

Recent changes in the programme have included a shift towards providing many more single focus programmes and doing more regional work. For example, the IDeA is currently testing regional Leadership Academy Master Classes specifically for postgraduates.

Reasons for Participating

Participants had received information about the programme from a variety of sources, most often though having seen IDeA marketing material or having attended a conference, event or other training course where the Leadership Academy was mentioned.

The expense of the programme was not seen to be a barrier. Rather, the barrier was seen to be being able to dedicate the time to the programme (as it takes places in a number of sessions over a lengthy period of time). In the words of one respondent:

> *"not all members could commit to all sessions … the pressure of time meant that some people dropped out." (Leadership Academy Participant, Case Study 2).*

Discussions with respondents highlighted a number of motivating factors behind the decision to participate in the Leadership Academy. These included the opportunity for personal development and enhancement of the individual's CV, in addition to being perceived as an opportunity for networking and to engage in shared learning. For other participants, the reasons for participating were specific to their own circumstances. For instance, several were new councillors and wanted to use the programme to gain familiarity with the institutional and policy context.

In another case study, the new leader of the council was looking for some form of support for his role. He attended a two-day leadership course and picked up the idea about the usefulness of peer reviews. He then asked for a peer review of the Council on his return. He thought that a further leadership course would benefit him in his role as leader of the council and found information about the Leadership Academy. The council has a commitment to both member and officer training and money was found from the member training budget. The course was flexible enough to fit in with both his work and council commitments.

Experience of participating

The Leadership Academy was seen as helpful. Though it was felt that some elements were too 'academic', in general the range of options was broad

and useful, and geared towards practical examples that could help councillors in their work. The team at Warwick were thought to be highly experienced and capable. Organisers were responsive to feedback and changed their approaches as a result of this. The national scale of the programme enabled learning from a wide range of local authorities (in contrast to 'internal' training). Some participants had maintained contact with people they had met during participation on the programme. The confidential nature of the proceedings and the fact that the discussions were held on 'neutral' ground, away from the local authority helped to facilitate 'open and frank' exchanges.

Many participants said that they would and had already recommended the Leadership Academy to others.

One respondent highlighted a number of areas in which the programme would need to be strengthened if it is to retain its relevance. This included updating the content of the course to cover new and up-to-date policy areas such as Local Area Agreements and the implications of the forthcoming White Paper:

> *"Leaders need to be able to learn things very quickly. It would be very good if the Leadership academy could look at issues likely to come up on the horizon – such as the White Paper". (Leadership Academy Participant, Case Study 15).*

Impact
General
This programme filled up months in advance of starting and has been very popular. The evaluation method adopted for the Leadership Academy Programme consisted of 'happy sheets' for feedback from participants which have subsequently been used by the IDeA to determine changes and develop the programme further. However, the results of these have not been made available to the evaluation team.

Individual
Participants identified a number of impacts on themselves. These included increased awareness of the tensions within political groups which have been used to good effect to build relationships and overcome problems. Some respondents reported a renewed capacity for understanding the views of others, even where they didn't share them. Similarly, skills in strengthening the effective working relationship between officers and members were also strengthened as a result of participation on the Leadership Academy and had been used in practice. Several respondents reported that this had increased their confidence and willingness to challenge officers in a non-confrontational and effective manner, including encouraging officers to put forward alternative proposals and to respond constructively when these are scrutinized. In another authority the Leader had participated on the Leadership Academy and reported a similar impact on his own working practices and relationships with officers.

Organisational

Generally, identifying organizational problems was more difficult and where this was possible was largely through impacting on the behaviour and confidence of high level elected members. The Leadership Academy was said to have helped senior elected members in a number of areas, including the appointment of new officers, changes to scrutiny arrangements and also through increased knowledge and confidence in relation to understanding both the overall strategic direction of the authority and specific service areas. One Leader had used Myers-Briggs analysis, learned on the Leadership Academy, to reorganise his cabinet, matching individual cabinet members to tasks based on their own personalities.

Respondents thought that the Leadership Academy did contribute to overcoming inward looking perspectives within political parties. However, to overcome this some respondents suggested that more councillors would need to attend the Academy and alter their behaviour as a result. Several case study authorities remarked on the potential for wider participation in the Academy in the near future.

Cost effectiveness

There is little basis with which to judge the cost effectiveness of the Local Leadership Academy. There are no comparator courses to use as the basis to judge the relative cost of the programme and participants could offer little evidence of cost savings achieved as a result of their participation on the programme. That said, respondents did suggest that the programme had been beneficial and offered no criticisms of the cost of participation.

Policy Linkages

There are clear policy drivers for some of the modules/streams available within the Leadership Academy. For example, the 'Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority' and 'Fastrack' programmes are driven by policies around equality and diversity issues. Generally, the programme is aligned with the modernisation agenda and attempts to open councillors' experiences to the ways in which other councils work and particularly the ways in which councils which have fully accepted the modernisation agenda have gone about implementing it.

Conclusions

The programme has achieved widespread take-up and has become embedded in the sector. Discussions with participants reveal that the programme achieves its own objectives of building the confidence of councillors, developing their understanding of leadership and developing peer support networks. Councillors clearly benefit from learning from the experience of others and appreciate the style and delivery of the programme. However, few participants reported having learned hard skills and techniques and it was more difficult to identify clear organisational changes than it was to highlight increased confidence among participants as a result of engagement with the programme. That said, given the nature of the client group, this sort of soft-skill development and the omission of hard skill

development might be more appropriate than in programmes aimed at officers.

Advanced Leadership Programme

Introduction

The Advanced Leadership Programme (ALP) consists of three distinct phases intended to give managers the knowledge and skills to manage change and strategic projects. The IDeA contracted Ashridge and the INLOGOV Partnership at the University of Birmingham; Centre for Management Policy Studies (CMPS); Leadership Research and Development Ltd to deliver the programmes giving participants a choice of venue and provider. The IDeA is currently re-tendering for providers to deliver a revised programme.

Background

The Academy Leadership Programme was created in response to feedback from some of the most senior executives in local government who identified a need for a programme that would go beyond day-to-day leadership issues and explore the longer-term strategic, political and democratic issues that will shape the future of local government.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the programme, stated in the publicity material for local authorities (IDeA, 2005-06), are to provide local government leaders with the skills and capacity to:

- address continuous change;
- lead and develop complex organisations;
- deliver a diverse range of effective and responsive services;
- work across internal and external boundaries; and
- support the continued relevance of local democracy.

Project Delivery

The Programme is primarily targeted at the top two or three levels of management, including those already in these positions, and those with the potential to attain these positions in the next few years. The programme is delivered in three residential modules; one of three days and two of two days, over a period of six months. The cost of the programme for every individual is £3,950 + VAT. The modules focus on the following:

- Module 1: Personal leadership
- Module 2: Strategic leadership and leading organisational change
- Module 3: Inter-organisational leadership and connecting with communities

Each course of the programme is open to 20 managers and uses a variety of techniques. The programme focuses on participation and includes one-to-one coaching, 360 degree feedback and group work (IDeA, 2005-06).

In response to declining take-up and recent feedback, the IDeA recognised the imperfections in this programme and has now launched a replacement programme called "The Academy for Executive Leadership" for Chief Executives, Directors and Heads of Service, delivered jointly by SOLACE Enterprises and Ashridge Business School. The programme comprises two, three-day residential modules at Ashridge's venue in Hertfordshire, plus two practical days delivered by the IDeA. The programme is scheduled to begin in September 2006.

Reasons for Participating

Participants had become aware of the Advanced Leadership Programme through a variety of different means. Most had become aware of it through IDeA marketing material. However, others had found out about the programme through media coverage. For instance, one participant had read a review of the programme in a Sunday newspaper.

In some of the authorities participation in the Advanced Leadership Programme resulted from a strategic consideration of the training needs of senior managers as a whole, though this was not universal, and in cases the decision to participate was a more personal and individualistic one. For instance, some reported that they simply felt that they needed the challenge that they perceived the programme to offer. Some participants were motivated by the opportunity for networking and shared learning. As one respondent put it:

> *"it was great for networking, able to learn a lot from other local authorities. There were many chief executives aspiring to go elsewhere and people who wanted to be chief executives. There were a lot of very ambitious people there." (Advanced Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 2).*

Others felt that the Advanced Leadership Programme was attractive because it did not demand a major time investment in the way that a traditional academic qualification would and as such could be more easily accommodated.

Interestingly, interviews in one case study revealed that while the decision to send a senior officer on the Advanced Leadership Programme was taken in the context of the authorities overall strategic needs, there was also an acceptance that the individual concerned may use this personal development opportunity to enhance their employability and leave the council. This was accepted and felt to be in line with the organisation's commitment to staff development and public service:

> *"for a lot of us we believe in developing people and we accept that they might not stay but you develop them for public service [.....], it is about the passion for public service" (Senior Manager with line management responsibilities for Advanced Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 12).*

Experience of Participating

Several aspects of the Advanced Leadership Programme were thought to work well by participants. Respondents also felt that generally the programme was well organised and professionally run. They also thought that the quality of the delivery was high and valued the opportunity to network and engage in shared learning and to judge the progress of participants' own authority against that of others. Shared learning was facilitated both through discussions and networking with fellow participants, but also through more formal presentations from leading figures in the sector (such as Chief Executives and Leaders). Several respondents identified the peer review visit to another local authority as a valuable experience from which they had learned a lot. The mixture of teaching styles between lectures, presentations, group discussions and practical exercises and role play, was thought to be beneficial and helped to stimulate engagement and motivation.

Where participants had identified problems, they felt that feedback had been taken on board and the programme delivery had been changed as a result. For instance, one respondent reported that their cohort had felt the first module to be rather low level and unchallenging. In response, the remainder of the course had been altered to reflect this. However, a number of potential improvements were also noted. These included strengthening of the coaching sessions and additional presentations by Chief Executives from highly rated authorities, to offer more opportunity to learn from success. The opportunities for networking and development after participation was also mentioned in this regard. Another participant felt the treatment of 'urban politics' was overly simplistic and could have been improved. Finally, there was some discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of more cohort matching – for instance ensuring that a cohort has similar backgrounds (e.g. all Districts etc) and tailoring the programme content to their likely needs. While some felt that such tailoring would be beneficial, this may also constrain the potential for learning from others that arises from the wider cohort of participants from a variety of backgrounds and authorities.

Impact

General

The IDeA had used an immediate 'happy sheet' form for evaluation purposes and had used this feedback to revise programme content on an ongoing basis. However, the evaluation team was not given access to the feedback material to judge the immediate impressions of the participants.

Individual

Some saw the impact of the Advanced Leadership Programme as having enhanced their personal communications skills and ability to understand the nature of their relationships and communication with others, thereby allowing them to work more effectively in teams and specifically allowing them to be reflective of the types of leadership style that they were employing. Respondents also thought that their political awareness had improved. The course had also lent emphasis to the importance of partnership working. Others felt that while the programme had not taught

them new skills it was a useful 'compliment' to existing skills and working practices, helping the participants to use these more effectively. Some participants did report increased confidence as a result of participation and one reported that they felt more valued, motivated and satisfied as a result of participating on the course:

"It kept me more motivated so the council got a good deal...they get more out of me...the IDEA course contributed to that...I was on the course with Directors and Deputy Directors....but they didn't treat me any differently" (Advanced Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 14).

However, one participant had ultimately been de-motivated as a result of combination of participating on the Advanced Leadership Programme and subsequently being unable to use her new found skills in the workplace. She attributed this to the authority still being overwhelmingly organised by specialism, limiting the opportunities for progress through possession of generic management skills.

Organisational

It was more difficult to identify any organisational impacts from participation on the course. In one authority, where a relatively large group of senior managers had participated, this was felt to have increased the general management and leadership capacity of the group and had helped them to work more closely together as a team, but respondents found it more difficult to identify any specific examples of how their wider teams and departments or the whole authority had benefited as a result of their participation. The one example that they were able to translate related to reflecting some of the content from one of the invited speakers on the Advanced Leadership Programme to deal with absence management within his department. Generally, participation on the Advanced Leadership Programme was felt to compliment the development of existing organisational systems, such as performance management or target setting, though these efforts were already in place prior to participation. Others reported that the only way that there had been impact on the organisation had been through the participants' own working practices. For instance, several reported that they had more confidence and were more able to 'let go' and devolve control of initiatives to others, with the result that projects received more commitment and 'buy-in' from others. There was, though, relatively little evidence of organisational systems and processes having changed.

Some respondents reported frustration at the lack of opportunities for translating their learning into organisational outcomes:

"[I] came back off the course very enthusiastic but there is no where to channel it. No-one recognizes that I could contribute outside my day job- there is a lack of cross-cutting thinking." (Advanced Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 2).

Where participants had not been able to find ways of using the programme to impact on the authority some ascribed this to the small numbers of staff who had participated:

> *"two people doing the ALP in 22,000 council employees can only have a limited impact." (Advanced Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 2).*

Cost Effectiveness

There were a variety of views about the cost effectiveness of the Advanced Leadership Programme. None of the respondents were able to identify anything that they had been able to do as a result of the programme to generate increased efficiency and cost savings for the authority. Moreover, a number of respondents thought that the programme was expensive and recognized that this presented an opportunity cost in terms of other training and development activities that might have been funded with the same amount of investment. One participant worried about this in the context of not having been able to translate her own development into organizational impacts.

> *"[I] feel strongly like [I] should put something back after so much money [has been] spent on the ALP." (Advanced Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 2).*

Others were also concerned about the costs of the programme in the context of wider efficiency concerns and the potential to use a similar level of investment to participate in a more locally-tailored approach:

> *"In a way, it's quite extraordinary to spend that amount of money… personally I think it could have been spent on something that was maybe targeted a bit more specifically to [the council]". (Advanced Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 9).*

Nevertheless, some respondents, while noting the high cost of the programme, didn't think that this was a result of 'profiteering' but reflected the cost of the running the programme, in particular gaining access to high quality speakers and facilitators and in particular using the residential facilities at Ashridge. While these were clearly appreciated, at least one respondent highlighted this latter expense as one that might be reduced to produce a more cost effective programme in the future:

> *"Ashridge is like a five star hotel. It's an excellent training facility, but it's very, very posh…I think a lot of the costs are probably contained within where it [the ALP] is held". (Advanced Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 9).*

Policy Linkages

No specific policy linkages were identified as key drivers for the Advanced Leadership Programme in discussions with the programme providers or the participants. However, the programme has clear linkages with the Pay and

Workforce Strategy, in relation to Organisational Development, Leadership and Skills and Capabilities. The programme is also linked more generally to the implementation of the modernisation agenda, with content reflecting prominent themes such as community leadership and partnership working.

Conclusions

The Advanced Leadership Programme has received widespread take-up. However, this had begun to slow by 2005 and as with some of the other programmes, this may mean that a 'steady state' of delivery may be at a lower level than in the initial period. It may also reflect the relatively high cost of the programme. Nevertheless, the course is clearly highly regarded and relevant to the broad needs of senior officers in local authorities. However, several aspects of the programme appear to be disappointing. While participants clearly enhance their 'soft' skills around leadership, there was relatively little evidence of either 'hard' skill development or definitive and direct change in organisational working practices in participating authorities. This latter aspect is disappointing given the relatively high ranking positions of the participating officers. Suggestions for improvements would therefore be a clearer connection to initiatives and objectives connected to organisational change and a consideration of the underlying cost base and user-fees which reflect this. Maintaining a steady state of demand in the sector may require addressing this latter consideration in particular.

Gateway Reviews

Introduction

Gateway Reviews include a series of appraisals of a local authority procurement project at key stages in the life of the procurement. The Reviews are carried out by an external team of professionals who can offer an independent judgement on the success of the project and any support or other needs that the project might need to address prior to moving to the next stage. Members of the review team are drawn from a pool of trained and accredited reviewers maintained by the 4Ps. The Reviews are free to the client authority in return for an agreement to provide officers to be trained and accredited and to take part in future reviews in other authorities. The overall aim then is to retain build the capacity and skills development in the sector and to provide peer support between different local authorities.

Background

Gateway Reviews were initially pioneered in central government by the Office for Government Commerce in February 2001 to improve the success of large-scale central government procurement projects. Since then, almost 1,000 reviews have been completed and their use has been extended to the Ministry of Defence and the NHS. The Byatt review (DTLR, 2001) of local government procurement recommended that the local government sector should adopt the Gateway model. The 2003 National Procurement Strategy for Local Government (ODPM, 2003) endorsed this recommendation and the Capacity Building Programme funded the translation of the Gateway Review

method into the local government sector to be administered by the 4Ps. The Capacity Building Programme has continued to fund the roll-out of the programme and since then, several government departments have made additional funding available to the 4Ps to extend its use to specific policy areas. For instance, the DfES has made Gateway Reviews compulsory for all Building Schools for the Future programme of schools rebuilding.

Aims and objectives

The Gateway Reviews programme has a number of aims and objectives operating at several levels. For instance, with regard to individual procurement projects, Gateways are intended to ensure that all parties have confidence that projects can safely proceed to the next stage and thereby facilitate the delivery of better quality projects through better quality scoping, faster delivery, better contract structure and enhanced value for money. At the level of the sector, the programme is intended to develop understanding, skills and the capacity to undertake procurement projects. However, this is achieved not merely through the direct results of each review but through training the reviewers and the learning of each authority that has a review and subsequently releases officer(s) for training to be a reviewer.

Project delivery

Gateway Reviews are intended to be undertaken at six key stages in the procurement process (see Figure 2). Each Review consists of a three day team visit to the authority with the first two days biased towards fact finding and the last day taken up with writing the Review report. This report includes a status ranking of Red, Amber or Green, with Green representing a signal that the project is ready to advance to the next stage in the procurement process. The report is given to the Project Owner only and the Project Owner is able to decide whether to make the report more widely available.

The programme has been widely taken up, helped in large part by the absence of direct user fees. More than 100 authorities had participated in the programme up to May 2005 and more were planned at that time. Consideration has been given to how the Gateway Review programme will be amended to suit the revised regional funding structure with the potential for regional pools of Review Team Leaders being discussed. However, there are draw backs to this model, principally the current lack of enough suitable team leaders to appropriately staff these regional pools.

Figure 2: Gateway Review Process
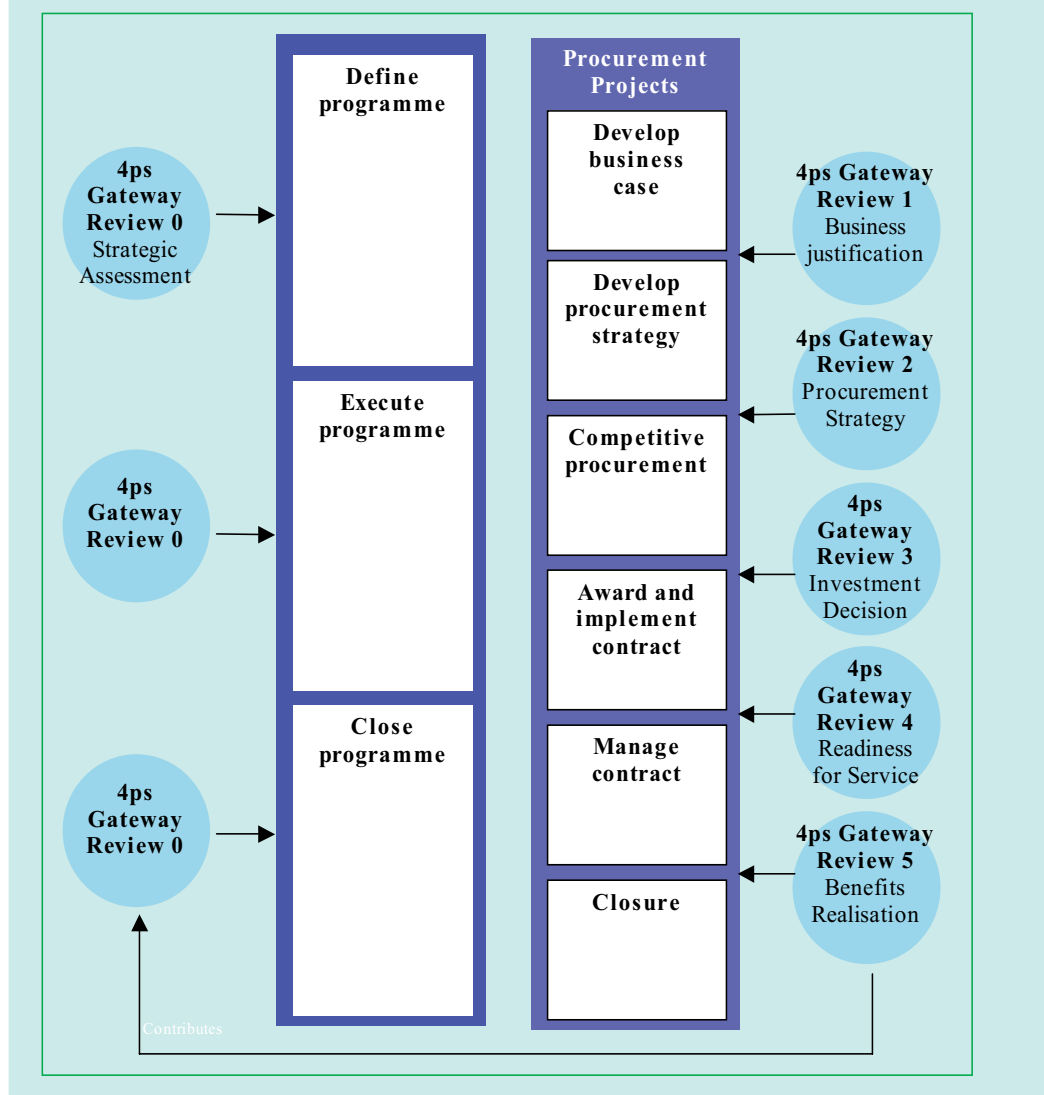
4Ps (2005), *4ps Gateway Reviews and the regional centres*.

Reasons for participating

Participation in Gateway Reviews is compulsory for some large scale procurement projects. However, case study authorities also recorded a variety of additional reasons for participating in Gateway Reviews. These included accessing external validation for a project, accessing 'free' support and also to be "seen to be doing something" (Project Officer, Participating in Gateway Review, Case Study 2) as well as simply improving the quality of the procurement process.

This meant that case studies had differing levels of commitment to the programme. Regardless, even where authorities initially lacked any deep commitment to the programme, some did find that having experienced a Gateway Review that there was increasing commitment to participation. So for instance, some authorities agreed to undertake more than the

compulsory reviews, to subscribe to reviews on projects where they were not compulsory or to develop internal procedures or arrangements with neighbouring authorities that are based on the Gateways approach.

> *"once they [the review team] got going we found it was very useful for us because they could sympathise with the problems we had and due the seniority of the [reviewers] they could articulate issues to senior people here" (Senior Officer, Case Study 6).*

The research team also conducted interviews with many officers who had undertaken training as Reviewers. Their decision to undertake the training was prompted in the main by the experience of benefiting from a Review, wanting to give back to the process as well as a desire to develop their own skills. However, many had also experienced difficulties in actually taking part in a Review as a result of the difficulty in being released from their job.

Authorities had become aware of the Gateway Review programme in a variety of ways. For instance, several were informed as part of the process of applying for PFI credits. Others had seen 4Ps material and one had attended an Office for Government Commerce presentation on the Gateway Review model and been put in touch with the 4Ps through this.

Experience of participating

Generally, the experience of participating in Gateway Reviews was seen in positive terms. The role of external validation was seen as massively beneficial. Many of the participants acknowledged an initial sense of apprehension at the notion of further 'inspection' and found negotiating this apprehension to be an important part of generating commitment and genuine buy-in to the Review. Having undertaken the first Review however, most respondents suggested that this initial apprehension had receded and that there was an acknowledgement that a more open and cooperative attitude on the behalf of the Project officers would assist in the ensuring that the Review produces effective and helpful recommendations.

Respondents reported that committing to the Review process was often difficult at the stage at which the Review process is aimed. Because the Reviews are aimed at important stages in the procurement process there was a tendency to want to delay each of the Reviews until that stage was complete. This was especially given the degree of preparation work that is required for a Review, which was mentioned by some respondents as a drawback to participation.

> *"I just thought, let's get the ITN out of the way first, or lets just get to preferred bidder stage and then do a review" (Project Officer, Gateway Review Participant, Case Study 3).*

However, these same respondents also noted that this was the very reason why the Review was necessary. Nevertheless, some participants did feel that the amount of preparation required could be reduced:

"I think the principle is good and right to make sure things are on track but it does need to be streamlined" (Project Officer, Gateway Review Participant, Case Study 5).

Respondents also appreciated the confidential nature of the report, although this was in reality less effective than it might in principle because of the internal pressure to share the results of the report. In this regard, while the traffic light system of highlighting issues that need addressing is seen as useful by officers actually working on procurement projects, this often proved to be problematic when aired to a wider audience. As a result, several case studies had encountered problems with sustaining a project once a 'red light' had been raised, when in reality the Project Owners simply felt that this had highlighted an area of the procurement that needed further work. On the other hand, in some authorities, the Review process and the report had been used by project officers to communicate difficult issues to senior officers in a way that they felt had been more successful than if they had simply done so directly themselves:

"we were fairly sceptical at the start because it looked like another burden on the project [....] but once they got going we found it was very useful for us because they could sympathise with the problems we had and due the seniority of the [reviewers] they could articulate issues to senior people here" (Project Owner, Gateway Review Participant, Case Study 6).

Respondents also appreciated the rigour of the process and reported that Review members were appropriately skilled with sufficient experience. However, some did comment that the Review team changed between Reviews and this had meant that there was additional work in preparation and context setting, despite the Chair of the Review remaining the same. The general impression was that the Review process would be enhanced if the same team could be kept together throughout. Some also felt that the process could be improved by strengthened guidance on how to develop commitment to the process within the authority.

Those respondents that had received training to become Reviewers had generally enjoyed the experience and found the development achieved to be positive. They found the content of the course interesting and appropriate.

Impact
Individual

Unlike many of the National Programmes, Gateway Reviews are not primarily aimed at individual level impact. Nevertheless, the participation in a Review was thought by some respondents to encourage more open working methods and increased sharing of good practice. Participants had developed and reinforced their existing project and programme management skills and procedures:

"at the time it wasn't so obviously useful because we had our heads down to deliver the project but now when I am reviewing projects I think I have a set of trigger points that I am looking for [....] this is about getting the structure right" (Gateway Review Participant, Case Study 6).

Participants reported that they also developed increasing experience in managing the "political processes … and sometimes gamesmanship" surrounding procurement projects. They also noted that increased confidence that arose from having a successful Review that confirmed the validity of their actions and the procedures that that they had used.

Respondents also reported similar benefits from acting as Reviewers themselves. Participants on Reviews had also gained experience of project development that has been useful in developing their own procurement projects. This peer review aspect of the Gateway Review programme was seen as a major advantage by some participants in the sharing of knowledge and mutual learning:

> *"It's a good peer review and in that lies its strength – if ever it was taken away from that and done by autonomous people it would lose its credibility" (Gateway Review Participant, Case Study 5).*

Organisational

Many respondents cited examples of Gateway Reviews having impacted beneficially on both the specific project that they were applied to and to the wider operation of their departments and the authority as a whole. At the level of the projects being reviewed, several respondents thought that their procurement processes were on time and appropriately structured, at least partly as a result of having received a Gateway Review. In another case study, Gateway Review 0 had resulted in improved market testing and a larger number of bidders than had previously been the case. In several other cases, respondents thought that the Review had ensured that the authority had committed sufficient resources to the procurement process by offering an independent external view that funding and resources needed to be increased.

For example, Gateway Reviews were said to be having positive impacts on departments, through increasing capacity. In relation to one, an interviewee reported that department-wide processes and procedures were being strengthened and:

> *"there is a greater awareness and formalized importance of performance management. This is getting through to other people in the team not just us." (Gateway Review Participant, Case Study 2).*

Another noted how experience was being shared in and across departments, saying,

> *"we have worked with leisure to share our experience… and given recommendations to their GR. We are learning from each other so we don't reinvent the wheel." (Gateway Review Participant, Case Study 2).*

In other case studies, the impact was thought to be 'culture changing' with several concrete examples of organizational change being cited as direct impacts of the Gateway Review process. For example an estate management

service had been reformed so that building management was more closely linked with overall service objectives. In several other departments project management procedures had been introduced or revised and new project governance structures had been introduced. A small number of authorities were considering establishing in-house procedures for reviewing smaller procurement projects using a slimmed down Gateway model. In another case study the authority had established a change management board as a result of a Gateway Review.

The factors that facilitated a wider organisational change from participation in a Gateway Review were senior management commitment, cross departmental sharing of good practice and the use of central structures to share project management expertise. Those factors which blocked this impact were resistance to change and new ways of working and organisational structures which prevented sharing of good practice between teams and departments.

Cost effectiveness

There are several aspects to the consideration of the cost effectiveness of Gateway Reviews. First, Gateways are free to the participating authorities in relation to user fees at least. However, authorities reported that they did face costs in some other important respects including in relation to time preparing documentation for the Review, in officer time in participating in the review and in releasing officers to take part in Reviewer training and subsequently to undertake reviews. That many of our respondents had been unable to find time to take part in a Review of another authority is a significant indicator of the difficulty that is associated with this latter issue.

The second aspect of the consideration is the cost to the Capacity Building Programme of facilitating each review. While no exact figures were forthcoming, this is a considerable cost.

Against this, is the third consideration; the potential savings attained from the impact of the Reviews on the procurement projects they are applied to. While these are difficult to estimate in any aggregate manner, research by OGC suggests that the savings arising from the Gateway approach, where applied in full, are in the region of 4-5% of the project cost. This would mean that Gateway Reviews are extremely cost effective though the calculations and assumptions used in these estimates were not scrutinised by the evaluation team. In any event, the role of the Reviews in helping to avoid costly and the relative cost of alternative advice mean that even if such dramatic estimations are exaggerated, the cost effectiveness of the programme is likely to be substantial. This is without considering the long-term implications for the sector of building and retaining enhanced procurement capacity which might over the long-term reduce reliance and dependency on expensive external expertise.

Policy linkages

The main policy linkages for the Gateway Review Programme are the National Procurement Strategy and more recent demands for increased

efficiency in the public sector and in particular the requirement on local authorities to produce annual efficiency savings. The programme is also in line with the emerging agenda on shared service delivery, with Reviews being undertaken already on major shared service initiatives.

Conclusions

Gateway Reviews are well embedded in the sector. Evidence from the fieldwork suggests that the Reviews achieve their own objectives and contribute toward the overall objectives of the National Programmes. Despite its success, the programme will need to adapt to meet the challenges of regional funding and the potential ending of central subsidies. These will principally be the need to recruit sufficient regional pools of Reviewers and thought will need to be given to the mechanism by which those authorities that need support from Reviews the most but which might also be the least likely to pay user-fees.

Procurement Skills Training

Introduction

The 4Ps' Procurement Skills Training programme was initially conceived as a means of building capacity to implement the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government through the delivery of a small range of procurement training programmes for elected members, senior officers and procurement project teams.

Background

The 4Ps' Procurement Skills Training programme was initially conceived as a means of building capacity to implement the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government which had pledged £1.4m in 2003/04 to fund national training programmes (ODPM, 2003: 10). The Strategy also stated:

> *"IDeA and 4Ps offer training and development in key procurement skills. This has included piloting workshops for elected members and senior managers and more extensive modules for officers on PPP, project management and the Gateway Review process. Building on this work, the Government and LGA have agreed to pump-prime national training programmes in priority skills. This will encompass member and senior manager development and training for procurement project teams. The programmes will be delivered locally in partnership with IDeA and 4ps and a range of training partners." (ODPM, 2003:25).*

Aims and objectives

The Procurement Skills Training programme, was intended to achieve the objectives set out in the National Procurement Strategy (4Ps, 2004):

• Enhance members' and senior managers' leadership skills by equipping them to take a strategic role in procurement and partnering.

- Train project team members in key skills necessary for the successful delivery of major procurement and the management of strategic partnerships.

Project delivery

The Programme was initially split into two core elements:

- Members and Senior Managers (M&SM) training – these units stressed the importance of procurement to an authority, producing a high level action plan after two half day sessions. The aim was to educate senior figures in the authority about the need for leadership in key procurement projects.
- Project Team Training (PTT) – offered tailored support for project specific staff. PTT offered four days of training/support given throughout the life-cycle of procurement project, including development of the Outline Business Case, following project approval and following the issue of the Invitation to Negotiate.

These were heavily subsidised through the CBP funding. Poor and Weak authorities received a 75% subsidy and others a 50% subsidy. Both of these were also delivered by the 4Ps and associates. The 4Ps also developed and managed two other aspects to the Procurement Skills Training Programme:

- Middle Tier (MT) – For managers of small scale procurement projects. The content of the module included diagnostic activity and planning and spend analysis. The precise nature of the module was tailored by the authority to meet specific skills needs.
- Single Module Training (SMT) – described as "generic third party provision" – in a variety of areas such as 'Relationship Management', 'Risk Management', legal issues and Negotiating. This was individual centred training and 2/3 subsidised by the CBP fund.

The 4Ps conceptualised this as a holistic package of training courses, as Figure 3 suggests.

Figure 3: Initial Structure of the Procurement Skills Training Programme
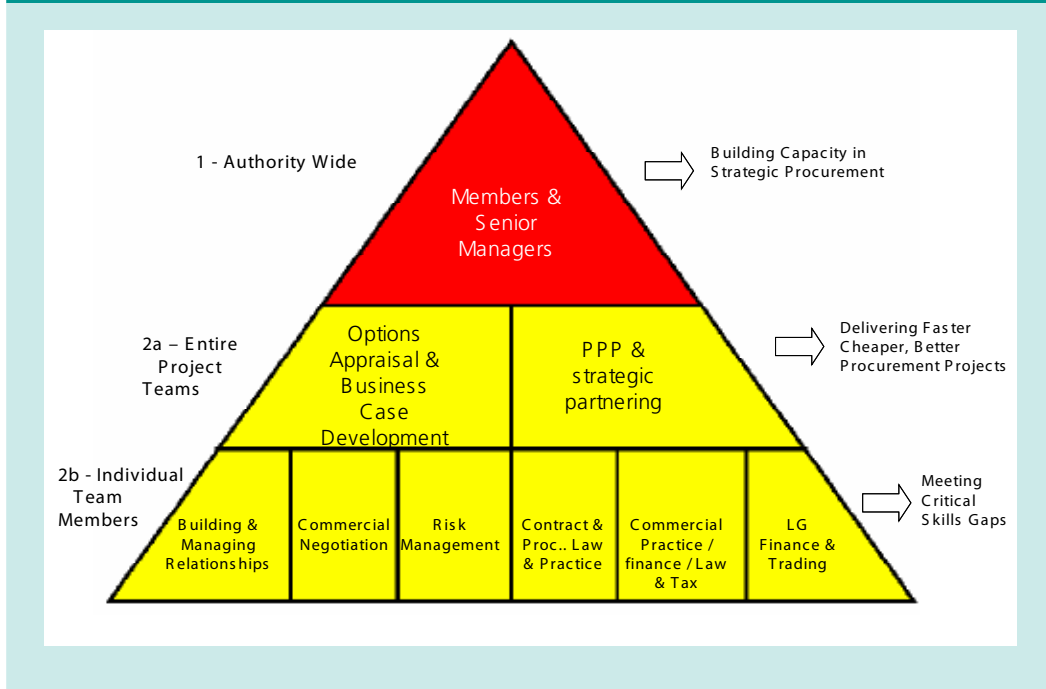
The take-up of Procurement Skills Training was good. For instance, by September 2005, more than 160 local authorities had engaged in one part of the programme or another.

The Procurement Skills Programme has evolved over the period of delivery with more emphasis being placed on focusing the content around Efficiency Review-related issues. The 4Ps have also given much thought to revising the Programme to meet the challenges of increased regionalisation. The procurement skills training now offered by the 4Ps has been revised and is broadly structured as follows:

- Strategic level courses, including in:
  - strategic procurement & its success factors
  - delivering efficiencies & value for money
  - getting started on shared services
  - strategic assessment, options appraisal & business case
- Project level courses whose content is currently under review.
- Advanced level courses in specialist subjects including negotiation skills, risk management and the policy environment.

Reasons for participating

In several of the case study authorities, procurement had been identified as a skills and capacity gap area. These gaps had been recognised either through the CPA process or where a new procurement department or team was being established. Generally, the context for local authority capacity building in relation to procurement was set by the National Procurement Strategy and the need to deliver efficiency savings. In several of the case study authorities,

respondents reported that they had considered alternative provision and found the training offered by the 4Ps to be competitively priced.

Experience of participation
Generally, participants were impressed with Procurement Skills training, especially the level and amount of material covered on both M&SM and PTT modules (those covered in the case study authorities). Participants felt that they had been given a thorough introduction to procurement issues and that the facilitation of the training was high quality and well managed. Some did though express mild concern at the amount of material covered, especially in the M&SM events, suggesting that some participants had struggled to take-in the volume of information communicated.

Impact
Individual
There was mixed evidence of the impact of Procurement Skills Training at the level of the individual, with respondents in one case study suggesting that there had been very little impact and others having difficulty remembering the precise impact of such a short training course which they had attended some time ago. However, in the others, the level of awareness of procurement had certainly been raised:

> *"It is a good insight … it has made people more aware of procurement and what the requirements are and what best practice is." (Participant, PTT Module, Procurement Skills Training, Case Study 1).*

Awareness raising was the key impact attributed to M&SM modules, whereas those that had been on PTT courses also suggested that they had learned some new skills and relevant knowledge and had used these to good effect in the workplace:

> *"It enhanced my skills and I feel more confident. It did enhance my procurement skills, gave me a wider understanding and increased my confidence levels…officers come and ask me what do I do about this and director came and asked me". (Participant, M&SM Module, Procurement Skills Training, Case Study 1).*

As the quotation above reveals, where this was related to an individual's job, this had helped to raise confidence levels. Participants had also either been introduced to or strengthened their project management skills though the extent of this was limited by the short length of the course.

Organisational
In one case study authority, respondents thought that the council's procedures on procurement were more embedded in the organization as a result of the senior level people having attended the M&SM event. Procurement rules had also been changed and were now more flexible, giving enhanced freedom and responsibility to managers. This was not solely attributable to the 4Ps programme, but it had had some impact in facilitating this. This had contributed to the increased flexibility and responsiveness of the authority as well as to empowering individual managers. In another

authority, however, staff in the training unit in one of the case studies had been disappointed at the lack of response from elected members who had participated on the M&SM event. In this authority, however, the impact had been constrained by a lack of commitment from elected members and low participation in the M&SM event. Interestingly, in one M&SM case study authority the impact had been to generate further demand for training. However, this had not yet been provided and some frustration had resulted.

In another authority that participated on the PTT course, the attributed impact was substantial. Respondents reported that they had previously lacked confidence and credibility because of a past procurement failure and PTT support had not only helped to bridge skills gaps, it had also built the confidence of the authority in the project team. Respondents also reported conscious efforts to embed the skills and knowledge they gained from PTT in the organisation, though this was taking time to achieve:

> *"Everything is very new and it isn't second nature yet, we are learning. We are trying to embed behaviour in the organization" (Participant, PTT Module, Procurement Skills Training, Case Study 11).*

Respondents in this authority also reported that they were now more able enabled to get projects underway quickly and to do things that the authority would not have been able to do before the programme. As examples, respondents point to the examples of procurement process of two new leisure centres and the Customer Service Centre.

Cost effectiveness
Respondents generally found it difficult to assess cost effectiveness in the sense that no formal appraisal had been undertaken. However, respondents felt that the training received had been of high quality and had not been prohibitively expensive. Moreover, several respondents reported that they had specifically chosen Procurement Skills Training in preference to other provision available as a result of the low cost of participation.

Policy linkages
The main policy linkages for the programme are with the National Procurement Strategy and Efficiency Review objectives.

Conclusions
Procurement Skills Training had generally been well received by participants. M&SM had in places had the impact of enhancing awareness and understanding of the need for strategic leadership in procurement and where this had not been the case, the reason appeared to rest with the authority rather than programme delivery. PTT had also helped the delivery of projects and there was some evidence of the utilisation of learning to build procurement capacity in the authority on a wider basis. In one of the case studies this appeared to have been significant. Generally, while the impact of Procurement Skills Training had been limited in nature this was broadly in line with what could be expected from such a programme. This was especially so given the small scale of the courses in each authority and that some time had elapsed since many of the case studies had participated

on the programme. Take-up, though, was good so it is fair to conclude that the programme had had a small but widespread impact in the sector and this had contributed to generally rising awareness of procurement skills and techniques and the need to build further capacity in the future.

Appendix Two: Framework Contract Programmes

The Future Leadership Programme

Introduction

The Future Leadership Programme (FLP) is a six month national programme to develop middle managers in local government and the fire and rescue service. The FLP was initially run by a partnership of Delloittes, the Office for Public Management and Ashridge.

The overall approach of the programme has been to link the development of individuals who attend the course to organisational change and development in their host authorities. As such, there are a number of linkages to projects to be undertaken between modules.

The programme consists of three residential modules:

- **Module 1: Building Individual Capacity:** Module 1 is held at Ashridge Business School, and lasts for 3 days, including 3 nights. The main theme of the module is developing personal leadership awareness and skills. The modular aims include:
  - To increase participants' self awareness and understanding of how they are perceived by others with whom they hold key working relationships. This is achieved through a heavy emphasis on 360 degree appraisal, using Myers Briggs personality assessment tools.
  - To identify and apply appropriate models of leadership within the context of participants' organisational challenges.
  - To use learning styles, coaching techniques and open questions to enhance performance and improvement and to increase the opportunity for delegation.
  - To explore the modernisation agenda for public services and the current local government context.
  - To become adept at the creative use of strategic techniques.
  - To extend personal power and influence within organisations and with key partners.
  - To motivate staff effectively within a performance management framework.
  - To build organisational capacity by identifying a process that needs re-engineering embedded within a service improvement project. This is to be taken up through an 'inter-modular project' developed between module 1 and 2.

- **Module 2: Building Institutional Capacity**: Module 2 is held regionally at a range of quality venues, and lasts for 2 days with one overnight stay. The main theme of the workshop is developing tools and techniques to manage information and resources and modular aims include:
  – To review personal development as leaders in organisations.
  – To develop greater understanding of good team leadership and team-working.
  – To build on and develop existing change management strengths.
  – To review the key practical success factors in project and programme management and business case development.
  – To interpret evidence such as trends and forecasts in order to plan service improvements.
  – To develop process redesign and stakeholder engagement skills in order to meet the challenges of the modernisation agenda.
  – To apply risk management techniques to projects.
  – To apply these lessons to individual projects.
  – To complete individual service improvement projects and to undertake an "appreciative inquiry" with a partnership leader and to carry out a 'cultural diagnosis visit' to another organisation. These are to be undertaken as 'inter-modular' projects.

- **Module 3: Building Organisational and Locality Capacity:** Module 3 is held regionally, and lasts for 2 days with one overnight stay. The main theme of the workshop is partnership working. Modular aims include:
  – To work more effectively in groups, teams and partnerships.
  – To develop micro-political skills in the context of different stakeholder groups.
  – To explore the tools, techniques and different challenges of community leadership and community engagement.
  – To explore the roles, relationships, processes and procedures that enable effective partnership working.
  – To enhance the contribution of member/officer relationships to effective organisational leadership.
  – To evaluate the implications of "localism" in terms of service reconfiguration.

The programme is aimed at middle managers and was initially called the "Middle Manager Development Programme".

Background
The initial OPM research (OPM, 2003) highlighted capacity building needs in the local government sector across a range of issues, such as change management, project management, performance management, community engagement and partnership working that were evident at a middle-manager level. As such, the then ODPM commissioned the development of a middle-manager development programme that could address some of these needs through the framework contract. All three organisations – Ashridge, Delloittes and OPM – responded to the initial Invitation to Tender and through a process of negotiation formed a partnership approach to develop the project together. The initial contract was to develop, market test and

then pilot the programme over 18 months. The initial proposal was market tested through a survey of all local authorities which achieved a response of around 180. The proposal was modified marginally as a result of this consultation.

Aims and Objectives

The programme aims to:

- Enhance management and leadership skills.
- Improve the performance of local government or the fire and rescue services through building management and leadership capability.
- Develop skills and personal effectiveness of managers to enable them to do their jobs effectively and take more challenging and demanding roles in the future.
- Develop best practice solutions to the practical issues facing local authorities and the fire and rescue services and encourage cross sector working and diversity.
- Understand the core themes of leadership in local government and the fire and rescue services.

The programme literature also identifies a number of potential benefits to individuals and organizations:[7]

- **Benefits for the manager**
  - Develop management capabilities in a cutting edge learning environment, concentrating on the issues that make a difference to performance.
  - Gain a practical understanding and thought leadership on the critical issues facing local government and the fire and rescue services.
  - A significant aid to career development.
  - Access to a bespoke learning portal and virtual learning both during and after the programme.
  - Opportunity to apply skills through practical project work between modules.
  - Opportunity to develop local government and fire and rescue services network and sustain learning through the alumni community and continued access to learning.

- **Benefits for the local authority**
  - Increase in organisational capacity and leadership effectiveness of managers.
  - Create a more self confident management population who are better equipped to manage and lead change.
  - Informs and responds to critical leadership issues such as implementing the new CPA, developing sustainable communities, new Children's Services, E-government, delivering effective partnership working.

7 from the Future Leadership Programme website (http://www.futureleadership.gov.uk/ODPM/FLP/objectives/Info.htm) accessed 07/07/2006.

- – Through the project driven nature of the programme managers will be delivering real, positive change in local authorities and fire and rescue services.
  - – Several authorities have already saved money through the project work of participants.
  - – Enables discussion and spread of best practice.

- **Additional Benefits for the Fire Service**
  - – Maps to most of the Integrated Personal Development System competencies for station manager, area manager and group manager.
  - – Enables participants to mix with colleagues from outside the fire and rescue services.

Project Delivery

The FLP was rolled-out in January 2005. More than 400 delegates have now participated. However, stimulating demand has been difficult throughout. The programme providers have identified several reasons for this:

- The cost of participation. This had been identified in the initial market testing but the required specification of quality meant that the price has not been able to be reduced.
- Competition with other similar programmes. Many of these have been developed with support from the CBP, such as through Direct Support or Improvement Partnerships.

The cost of participating on the programme has remained at £3,500 plus VAT (including all residential costs) throughout its lifetime. These costs were based on the assumption of around 25 participants on each cohort. However, there has also been a recognition that these costs are relatively high for the sector and as such a variety of subsidies have been offered to stimulate demand. The subsidy for the period January to October 2006 arrangement is:

- 2 delegates for the price of 1.
- 3 delegates for the price of 2.
- 5 delegates for the price of 3.
- 6 delegates for the price of 4.
- 9 delegates for the price of 6.

Additionally, the Society for Information Technology Managers offers a bursary scheme for senior ICT or e-government managers. Applicants are invited to submit a statement of application covering their perceived strengths and weaknesses against the SOCITM e-government skills framework and how they will put the development they receive through the FLP to use.

Since the beginning of the programme Deloittes have left the delivery partnership and the programme is now managed and coordinated by OPM. In order to deal with insufficient take-up significant marketing activity has been conducted. This activity is unfunded and has not yet been successful in

raising take-up sufficiently. Efforts have also been made to engage Improvement Partnerships. However, progress in this has been slow, due to perceived slow progress on the part of the partnerships and some antipathy toward generic national programmes as opposed to locally designed and tailored programmes.

The problems with take-up, even with the subsidy arrangement, mean that there is concern about the sustainability of the programme and some thought is being given to the potential for alternative cheaper versions of the FLP to run in the future. These might include a greater emphasis on local/ regional variations to the content, but the providers stressed that they did see benefit from the current arrangement which facilitates the sharing of learning and good practice.

Reasons for Participating

Authorities' reasons for participating were varied. One authority had recognised the need to engage in middle manager development after a major restructure which handed significantly more responsibility to business managers. There is a large group of these Business Managers and only three were selected to participate on the Future Leadership Programme.[8] Those selected were viewed as among the more capable managers in the group and at least part of the rationale for their selection had been a desire to offer them development opportunities to dissuade them from leaving for another authority.

Several authorities noted the role of subsidised access as being a major incentive to choose to participate in the Future Leadership Programme as opposed to other management development programmes. The 'two for one' subsidy also meant that authorities were willing to send more than one participant, though none of the case studies had sent large groups of officers on the Programme. Many of the case study authorities had taken advantage of the SOCITM subsidy and SOCITM marketing had been the main way in which they had become aware of the programme. Others had become aware of the Future Leadership Programme through their line manager or word of mouth recommendation. Generally, the availability of subsidies had been a major influence behind the decision to participate and had allowed individual participants to justify the loss of their time. Some questioned whether they would have been able to justify this, had the subsidy not been available.

In places the Future Leadership Programme was just one of the options available to authorities and individual middle managers. Some of the alternatives included in-house management development programmes (including those financed through Direct Support), similar programmes offered through the local Improvement Partnership and independently developed management development courses at local universities, some of which had been bought into using Direct Support or through Improvement Partnerships. Several authorities were consciously 'piloting' the Future

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8 Others were participating in a middle management development programme run by a local university and funded by the relevant Improvement Partnership.

Leadership Programme, prior to making a decision about future training provision for middle managers.

Individual participants had opted to engage with the programme for a variety of reasons but these typically clustered around a desire to improve their management and leadership capacity. For some, especially those who entered the programme through the SOCITM route, the decision had been triggered by a change in role which had given them increased general management responsibilities, or the consideration of such a change in the near future.

Experience of Participating

Authorities approached the process of selecting individual participants in a variety of ways. Some individuals approached their line managers autonomously requesting support for participating on the programme. In other authorities, staff were informed of the programme and asked to submit their interest. In some cases this led to competitive selection to attend the course. In still other cases the authority simply selected individuals to participate, sometimes with objectives like staff retention in mind.

Individuals clearly enjoyed the Future Leadership Programme. In particular, they highlighted the shared and participative learning approaches used to be welcome and preferable to lecture-based teaching:

> *"It wasn't like being sat in a lecture, people were sharing ideas all the time and there were a lot of experiences being pulled together and underpinning .. a bit of theory" (Future Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 1).*

Some participants highlighted the short duration of the course as a major advantage over other options such as a Masters in Public Administration. For instance, in one case study where middle managers had the option of participating on the Future Leadership Programme or an MPA a respondent commented that:

> *"it would be quite interesting to see how they feel after a gruelling two years. Or whatever it is of doing it. Certainly I preferred the Future Leadership: three bite sized chunks rather than signing your life away to two years of post-graduate study I have been there and done that and certainly don't want to do it with the day job s it will be interesting to see what we get out of ours compared to what they get out of theirs" (Future Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 1).*

The short duration of the course and the way in which it is structured allows individuals to gain an initial insight into a range of areas of study, meaning that they could identify future areas of interest for more in depth study at a later date. Several participants had indeed pursued these interests subsequent to their participation.

Other aspects of the course that were thought to be beneficial were the residential aspect, which some participants found to be beneficial by creating a separation from the work environment. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from one another:

> *"You could actually see commonalities in terms of problems people had to deal with…it was really useful to hear how other people had approached a similar situation" (Future Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 14).*

Participants also thought that attempts to establish ongoing dialogue and communications between learners through regional networks and an alumni website.

However, participants also identified some parts of the programme as being more successful than others. For instance, it was widely reported that Module 1 was more successful than Module 2. Module 1 focuses largely on profiling individual participants through a 360 degree appraisal process which many participants found to be inspiring and motivating. The exploration of workplace issues through roll-play and he sharing of experiences was also generally thought to be successful. The quality of the facilitators were also thought to be high for this module. Finally, the quality of the facilities at Ashridge were universally enjoyed and some even referred to them as an "incredible place to learn" (Future Leadership Programme, Case Study 4).

The reasons offered for the relative lack of success of Module 2 tended to reflect a mixture of venue and content related concerns. Some respondents felt that the regional venues that are used for Module 2 do not compare favourably with the venue and facilities at Ashridge. Others felt that the course content of Module 2 which covers project management techniques was difficult to pitch at the 'right' level because of the range of experiences and abilities of the participants, some of whom have no prior knowledge of these techniques and some of whom are experienced project mangers with Prince 2 or equivalent qualifications.

One further issue which was identified as less than successful by one participant was the predominance of participants from poor or weak authorities in his particular group. This was felt to limit the range of peer learning and exchange of ideas and information.

Impact
General
The programme providers have conducted 'happiness' evaluations at the end of each module, throughout the life of the programme. Generally, this evaluation activity shows that individuals value the level of personal development that they receive immediately after participating on the course. It also shows that participants generally rate process issues such as the quality of administrative support (booking, etc), the venue and approaches to facilitating learning as good. Participants also rate the course as making

productive use of their time and that it meets the stated objectives. However, this evaluation methodology is weak in relation to assessing both individual and organisational change because individuals have not been able to implement their learning in the workplace or affect organisational change and improvement. As such, a mixture of methodologies which collect immediate impressions and offer the opportunity to collect more long-term data on impact on participants' workplace behaviour and any organisational impacts are more appropriate for courses such as the FLP. Since taking responsibility for managing the programme, the OPM have recognised this weakness and have put in place plans to undertake survey-based evaluation with previous participants after a period of time since completing the course. However, this data was not yet available and the main data source drawn on below is the qualitative fieldwork undertaken in the case study authorities as part of the National Evaluation of the CBP.

Individual
Individual participants on the Future Leadership Programme reported having learned new skills and having used these in the workplace. The extent to which this was the case varied however, according to the existing level of knowledge of each participant. Hard skills acquisition tended to focus around project management and general management skills and therefore the scope for new learning was limited by the level of existing skills. For this reason, while some respondents reported that they were now more familiar with project management methods, others reported that Future Leadership Programme participants had learned few skills:

> "I haven't noticed that skills have improved particularly. I don't think it was a skills programme and if it was it didn't work. I think (they) have more knowledge about how things happen but it hasn't changed (their) ability to make things happen." (Senior Manager Respondent, Case Study 5).

Skills acquisition then tended to be more prominent where an individual participant had recently moved into a management position and had previously not had any management training or where they were contemplating such a change, as was the case for man of the IT managers/ officers that had participated on the programme with the assistance of the SOCITM bursary.

However, respondents were more universal in reporting having gained new softer skills, especially in relation to emotional awareness and reflection in relation to communication, presentation and influencing and in being able to see the broader and institutional context surrounding their own work. It was the acquisition and development of these softer skills that was cited as one of the key benefits of the course. In turn this had led many participants to experience increased motivation, confidence and effectiveness. Enhanced personal effectiveness was related to improved communication with others and self management:

"The most beneficial thing is the first part of the course where you look at yourself, understand yourself. I think it is very easy to get on with the day job… but actually understanding how people see you and your approach to work and your thinking seriously changes the way you act and the way that you do things." (Future Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 1).

"The 360 degree feedback was a wake up call about my management style… I thought my endearing grumpiness was good… but I have now changed my style of work… I'm now placing greater emphasis on active management of my one member of staff" (Future Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 14).

These personal competencies were augmented by an enhanced ability to understand the policy and institutional context surrounding their own day to day work. A key implication of this among some respondents was improved perceived personal effectiveness and capacity to reflect was a reported improvement in confidence and job satisfaction. However, others questioned this, citing that they felt no increase in job satisfaction from participation on the course.

Respondents were also questioned about the impact of the programme on their behaviour in the workplace in relation to innovation. Few respondents reported that they had become any more innovative as a result of participation on the course. However, some did report that they had engaged in an enhanced commitment to staff development for their staff and themselves. For instance, several participants had gone on to undertake further study as part of a recognised qualification.

Organisational

Some small impacts on the authority were evident within the case study authorities. However, there were no major examples of significant organisational impacts from participation on the Future Leadership Programme. Most of those that were evident tended to be related to changing the ways in which the individual participants had changed their own behaviour or approach to management within their own team or department, though there were instances of individuals impacting on authority-wide projects. For instance, one respondent reported that they had revised their own approach to management and leadership and as a result had argued within the authority for a different approach to a forthcoming reorganisation:

"we have been trying to make a cultural change within part of the organisation where we have got some problems, and it is all about whether we were directive or whether we sought to involve people. It worked really well and it wasn't as painful as perhaps it could have been. I was being directed by our senior management to do one thing and I cam back and said 'no I want to do it this way' and it was only because I had picked things up from [the Future Leadership Programme]" (Future Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 1).

Other participants noted that they had used their new found confidence, changed approach to management or new skills to support change programmes within their authorities. Participants also reported that they had increased openness to the ideas of others and as such had engaged in more formal processes for listening to the ideas of their staff. In other authorities respondents reported that participation on the Future Leadership Programme had encouraged them to improve their departmental processes in relation to project and programme management. In another instance, participants reported that they were interested in establishing in-house coaching and leadership programmes, partly attributable to their experience on the Future Leadership Programme.

Others, however, were unable to identify any major impact on the ways in which either their own teams and departments or the wider organisation works. While some reported that they felt that it was unrealistic to expect this, this finding was also partly related to the existing culture within the host organisation. Where staff development was widespread and there was a culture of learning from this, with either formal or informal processes established to share individual learning wider organisational change appeared to be more likely than where this was not the case:

> *"I think this is an organisation that is fairly receptive to applying different principles. I think that we have an opportunity here to use things, we are encouraged to use it" (Future Leadership Programme, Case Study 1).*

> *"There is a real opportunity for us to reflect on the training that we have done and to help to influence the next round of training and to also how we actually work and how we actually use that learning" (Senior Manager with line management responsibility for Future Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 1).*

Some also thought that change as a result of participation on the Future Leadership Programme would have been more significant at an organisational level if more middle managers had participated.

Cost Effectiveness

Cost effectiveness, like all the National Programmes, was difficult to judge. Few respondents identified any direct cost savings as a result of participation on the Future Leadership Programme. The cost effectiveness of the programme was judged by most respondents in comparison to other management development courses, though it was less clear that any of these were directly comparable in terms of standard or content. Despite this, the programme was generally thought to be "hugely expensive". That said, when placed in the context of high level provision such as MBAs or MPAs the Future Leadership Programme was thought to be value for money. Participants also thought that the programme was of a sufficient standard to justify the high price of the programme. Given these considerations, the value of the subsidy was thought to be highly influential in enabling participation, and the general feeling was that this would not be possible

without the subsidy arrangements. As such, one respondent commented that:

> *"It would be a real shame for it [FLP] to die out due to the cost, [I] think that the costs should be reduced to ensure it stays alive, rather than to scrap it". (Future Leadership Programme Participant, Case Study 11).*

The relatively high cost of the Future Leadership Programme is widely recognised and the programme providers have given considerable thought to the future deliver y of the programme with a view to reducing the cost of participation in order that the programme can become sustainable without the central subsidy arrangements.

Policy Linkages

There are several important linkages between the Future Leadership Programme and other CBP National Programmes as well as with the wider modernisation agenda. There are clear linkages with several of the Pay and Workforce Strategy priority themes, including leadership, skills development, organisational development and, to a lesser degree, recruitment and retention. The role of the Future Leadership Programme might be seen as one part of a broader package of national support for the skills development among local government officers, starting with the NGDP, progressing through the Future Leadership Programme and to the various senior level leadership programmes now operated by the IDeA. By supporting the development of IT officers through the SOCITM subsidy, there is also a potential contribution to the delivery of the e-government agenda.

Conclusions

The Future Leadership Programme has been successful in attracting a significant degree of take-up, notwithstanding the programme providers desire for a higher level of take-up among local authorities. The level of take-up reflects the perceived value of the programme to local authorities, with a perception of the programme being of high quality and taking relatively little officer time in relation to long-term high level management qualifications such as an MBA or MPA. Certainly, while participants recognise the more long-term commitment required by such qualifications, they did see the Future Leadership Programme as being of a similar standard to them. However, it was also clear that the value of the subsidy was also significant in allowing participants to engage with the programme and it is not clear that the programme is sustainable without either maintaining the subsidy arrangements or reducing user-fees. As such, while the programme has become embedded in the sector in a reasonably short period of time, there is a danger that this may not be sustained in the future.

The impact of the programme on the sector is difficult to judge. The programme clearly has a beneficial impact on its individual participants. In particular, participants appeared to have been motivated by the programme and certainly they had acquired an increased understanding of 'soft' skills issues such as emotional awareness and communication skills. However, it was less clear that motivational benefits would be maintained and the acquisition of hard skills was more variable and related to the pre-existing

experience of the individual participants. Organisational benefits, though clearly present in the form of the enhanced performance of individual participants, were less clear and were not easy to quantify. The existing culture of the host local authorities were influential in determining the extent to which the organisation can benefit from individual staff participation on the programme. Those that are open and experienced at deriving wider organisational benefits from staff development found this easier than those without this culture being in place. Further, the impact of the programme would undoubtedly be more significant were larger numbers of staff allowed to participate on the programme. Again though, persuading local authorities to engage more widely in the programme will depend in the future on issues of cost.

Performance Improvement and Management

Introduction
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Solace Enterprises have put together a national programme on behalf of the ODPM and LGA. The programme is part funded through the joint Capacity Building Programme for local government and is open to all Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue Services and National Park authorities. The fieldwork with respondents for this National Programme was undertaking outside the National Programmes case study authorities as the programme had not commenced when the case studies were selected and fieldwork undertaken. The evidence is based on four additional case study authorities.

Background
There has been recognition that effective performance management underpins the delivery of excellent local services. Local government has achieved real improvements in recent years, however there is a need for councils to continue to develop their approaches if they are to continue delivering improved partnership working, implement successful Local Area Agreements and rise to the challenges set out in the efficiency agenda.

Aims and Objectives
The Performance Improvement and Management Programme aims to be a long term sustainable programme to drive performance in local services. The programme publicity material highlights (PriceWaterHouseCoopers & Solace Enterprises 2006) that this programme is not a series of training events, but a programme that enables Local Authorities to improve through:

- solving real problems in real time during the programme;
- building a team of performance champions who can make things happen;
- focussing on changing behaviour and culture rather than systems and technical processes; and
- strengthening regional improvement networks.

Project Delivery

At present current project activity involves running two pilot programmes. Two additional pilots are also currently being considered in relation to Regional Improvement Partnerships and about supporting Local Area Agreements. The pilot activities allow the programme managers to test the content of the full programme before it is rolled out nationally. Details of the complete planned programme follow in this section. To date there has been limited demand for this programme, however programme managers are hoping for 'word of mouth' referrals on completion of the pilots in the longer term.

The Performance Improvement and Management Programme consists of a package of tailored support and active learning to meet the individual needs of every organisation. The programme will take place over a six month period and consists of three specific elements:

- Performance Pact – identifying your needs;
- 3 off-site Learning Events; and
- tailored Support – a menu of support to meet the organisations needs.

**Figure 4:** Performance Improvement Programme - Progress Chart
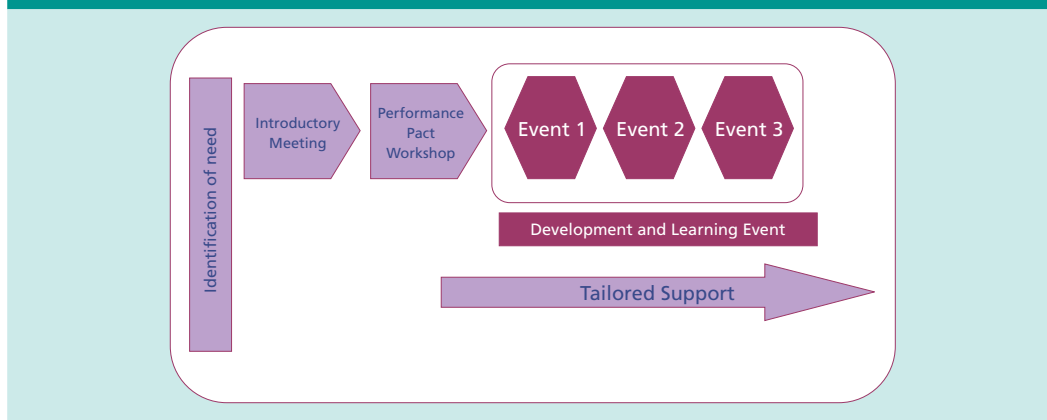
(Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers & Solace Enterprises, 2006)

The programme begins with the 'Performance Pact' process as illustrated in Figure 4 above. Spending time at an early stage on what you expect from the programme, how you will judge success, and who will be involved will create a greater focus for everyone. Each organisation is asked to draw up a brief 'Performance Pact', setting out their objectives for the programme. As short statement develops a shared understanding of the commitment that is being made, this Pact is then signed off by the Chief Executive and if appropriate, a leading elected member. The Pact is then used throughout the programme to help draw out outcomes for the organisation concerned.

The overall programme will follow the structure of the five stage performance cycle on the following diagram Figure 5. At each stage of the cycle there will be a strong emphasis on how to 'apply the theory'. New tools and techniques

will be introduced to help organisations improve their effectiveness and then provide time to apply this new learning to specific issues. A team of facilitators will be on hand to help support and challenge the organisations learning. The programme will also cover the people based skills (listed at the centre of the following diagram) required for effective performance management.

Figure 5: Performance Improvement Programme – Performance Cycle
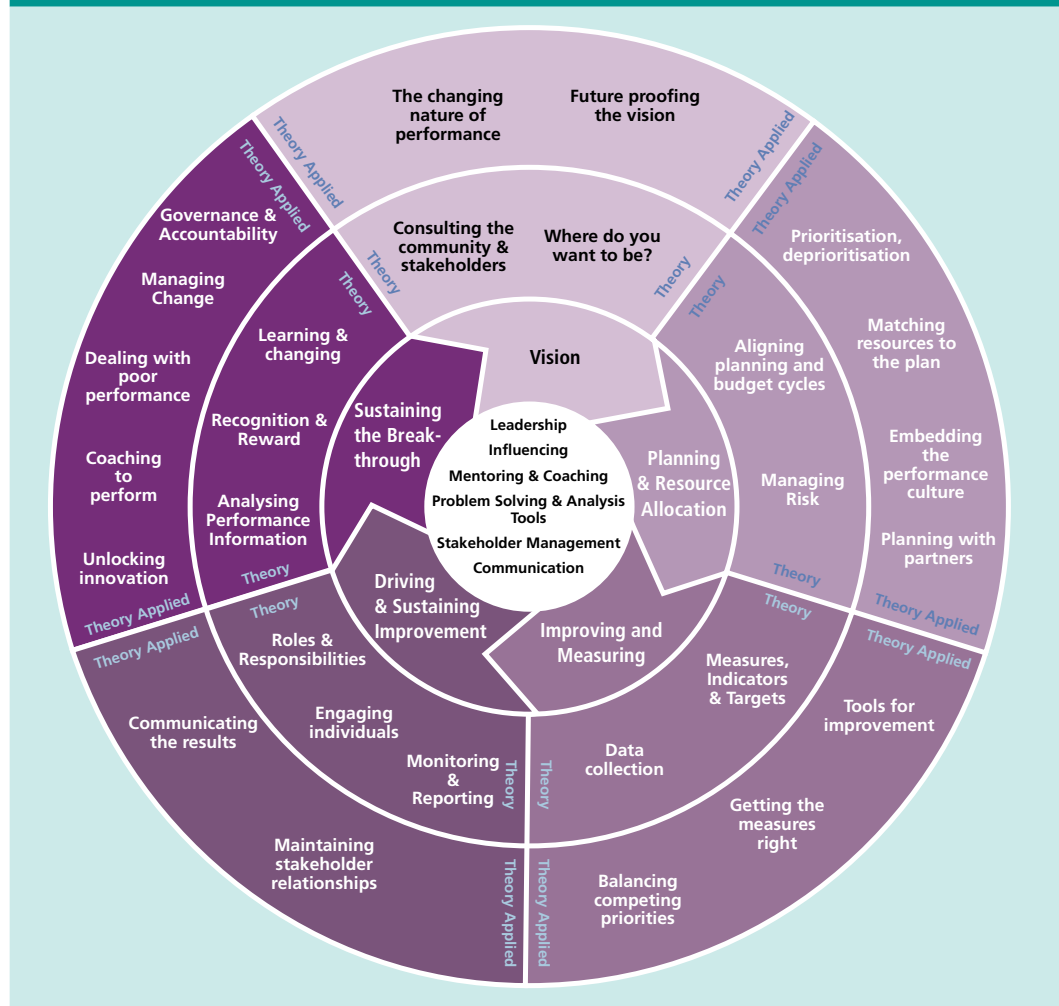
(Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers & Solace Enterprises, 2006)

The programme is for a team of up to 5 people per organisation participating on the programme. It is suggested that the team should be drawn from a mix of:

- Senior members
- Top team or Chief Executive/Fire Officer
- Senior manager(s) with responsibility for corporate policy, strategy, partnership working and performance management
- Service heads
- Middle managers with responsibility for service planning and performance issues

Organisations may also want to put forward joint teams with partner organisations to work on issues which require better partnership working. The cost of the programme is £23,000 - £25,000 (exact costs are to be agreed after the pilot programme. This figure includes £10K worth of tailored support which will provide an average of 7 person days design and delivery support (PricewaterhouseCoopers & Solace Enterprises, 2006).

Reasons for Participating

The individual authorities (which included local authorities and fire and rescue services) that opted to engage with the programme did so for a variety of reasons but these typically centred on a desire to improve their performance management monitoring and capacity, either corporately or within a particular service area such as waste management or adult social services. A couple of authorities had been asked to take part in the programme as a result of weaknesses identified through the CPA process. Others had identified their own areas of weakness. All were aware that the programme was a pilot and one participant had been asked to comment on proposals concerned with the development of the programme prior to it being launched.

Experience of Participating

Authorities sent teams, consisting of five or six participants, to take part in the programme. These were selected and composed in a variety of ways depending on the reason for taking part. One authority sent a high level team consisting of the chief executive, deputy chief executive, leader of the council, assistant director of performance and review and the director of adult social care; another sent a 'vertical slice' of a service team, headed up by the strategy and performance manager; another sent five heads of service. This made for a diverse mix of teams on the programme.

The authorities on the programme were also mixed in terms of being from unitary, district and county councils as well as from 'poor', 'weak' and 'good' authorities. This mix was viewed as a positive aspect of the course which facilitated learning amongst and across the teams.

> *"Another benefit was that we developed across the councils on the programme a definite 'esprit de corps' - a sympathy for the challenges which others are facing. That is particularly useful when you are working with groups you would not otherwise meet". (Performance Improvement and Management Programme Participant).*

However, it was also clear that a very successful and popular aspect of the programme was the team based approach. Participants were appreciative of the opportunity to work closely with colleagues from their own organisation. One participant explained how this would never happen within the course of normal working life because of the pressure of day to day work commitments:

> *"You are not able to take that time out to be able to look at the organisation and say how we can improve on this and to look at it from different angles. It was also good to understand each other and what we*

each brought to the table" (Performance Improvement and Management Programme Participant).

Several participants felt that the amount of time for working with colleagues in teams should have been increased in order to capitalise on the opportunities this presented and to have more time to work through the scenarios presented as part of the programme. One participant was critical of the amount of time spent on delivering information thorough a 'chalk and talk' approach which could easily have been downloaded from the internet or read in a book. These sessions were seen as a bit of a waste of the time of some of the high level staff that were in attendance. The participant and their team made suggestions to the course facilitators about how this format could be improved and these comments were very quickly taken on board. Changes were then made to the sessions so that they included more time 'doing work' within individual teams. Some "big group stuff was useful but not a lot of it".

Another aspect of the programme which was seen by one participant as less successful was the technique on 'governance and accountability'. The whole approach and the model was said to stand out as being underdeveloped and poorly presented. It stood out particularly because the rest of the programme was seen as very good. Again, this participant gave the course facilitator feedback about this session and they were confident that the session would have been amended or omitted when the programme was rolled out. All the participants were appreciative of the fact that the programme they took part in was a pilot and they saw it as part of their responsibility to give open and honest feedback that would inform future programmes.

The real benefits of the programme seem to have come in the opportunity to work through real life scenarios with colleagues and to learn new tools and techniques that could be applied to such situations and then taken back and used within the authority. One session entitled 'realising the benefits of investment' was quoted as particularly useful as well as several performance management tools such as 'stakeholder mapping' and 'the road to success'.

Impact
General

All participants had completed feedback questionnaires over the course of the programme to assist in the delivery of the pilot and to inform the future development of the programme.

Having the 'right team' take part in the programme was clearly an important factor. Interestingly, the authority who appeared to have got the most from the programme in terms of corporate development had failed to benefit in terms of impact on the service team which it had nominated to take part. It was stressed by the participant heading up this team that this was a reflection of the personalities and individuals, who made up the team, (several of which had now left or retired from the organisation), and was not a consequence of the quality or delivery of the actual programme. Another

participant reported how "having a senior team really helped" but that it was also necessary to get the timing right for the organisation so that they could get the most benefit from the knowledge and tools presented within the programme.

Individual

Individual participants on the Performance Improvement and Management Programme reported having learned new skills and techniques and having used them in the workplace. Hard skills tended to be focused on learning how to use particular performance management tools. These personal competencies were augmented by an enhanced ability to understand the policy and institutional context surrounding their own day to day work. A key implication of this among some respondents was improved perceived personal effectiveness and increased levels of confidence in applying these skills and in trying new methods of approach:

> *"It has made my thinking sharper, having time away to do that, with people that can really make a difference does move things on and is easier than trying to battle it out on your own" (Performance Improvement and Management Programme Participant).*

One participant was able to rather dramatically demonstrate the impact of the programme on them as an individual by explaining that their job role and title had changed as a direct result of their taking part. When the participant returned to their organisation after completing the second of the three events they realised that their organisation was approaching performance management in the wrong way. What was necessary was an emphasis on organisational development which was absent from the authority at that time. The participant presented a paper to their corporate management team to convey this need. This need was supported by the senior management team and the participant was then asked to head up a newly created organisational development team. The same participant had also kept in touch with some of the people from other authorities whom she had met on the programme. One of which, (a chief executive of a three star authority), was now mentoring them on an informal basis. The participant reported that she had got a lot out of this relationship.

Organisational

There were a number of instances of individual participants changing their workplace behaviour in ways that had benefited the organisation or implementing new procedures that made a difference. For instance, one individual in particular, in their new role as Head of Organisational Development, had made a great many changes to the ways in which the authority approached corporate planning. They had changed the 'Service Planning Group' from a meeting to a workshop, set up corporate planning workshops with executive and non-executive members and used stakeholder mapping to understand and adjust the volume of performance information required to engage people at different levels of the organisation. The programme also prompted the authority to set a vision for their council; something which they did not previously have and which the chief executive and the leader now very much believe in. It was clear that through this

particular participant taking part in the programme, significant organisational impact had been made, not least through the creation of a new organisational development department and team.

Other small impacts on the authority were evidenced through a greater importance being placed on the role and function of performance management, in the amending of the format of station and district plans and through the re-organisation of how resources are managed. However, several participants indicated that the impact of the programme might have been improved upon through greater support and guidance being given on how to disseminate and cascade learning from the programme amongst their colleagues when they returned to their own organisations.

Cost Effectiveness

Cost effectiveness, as with all the National Programmes, was difficult to judge. Few respondents identified any direct cost savings as a result of participation on the programme but participants did feel that corporate performance management processes and procedures had become more efficient as a result of their participation on the programme. The subsidy was considered to be an important factor in allowing the authorities to take part on the programme, especially given that it was a pilot. Several participants stressed the need for the programme to continue to deliver in terms of quality because of the heavy investment of time demanded of the participants on the programme and the 'hole in capacity' left as result of senior managers being away from their authorities whilst they attended the programme.

Policy Linkages

There are several linkages between the Performance Improvement and Management Programme and other CBP National Programmes as well as with the wider modernisation agenda and Gershon efficiencies. There are linkages with several of the Pay and Workforce Strategy priority themes, including skills development and organisational development.

Conclusions

The Performance Improvement and Management Programme clearly has a beneficial impact on its individual participants and on fostering close working relationships within and across the teams who take part in the programme. In particular, participants appeared to have been motivated by the programme and they had acquired hard skills in the form of particular performance management techniques and softer skills in terms of working as part of a team and in having the confidence to try new approaches and models of improvement. Organisational benefits were clearly present through the increased prioritisation of performance management amongst those authorities that took part and through the re-organisation of some of organisations that could be demonstrated as a result. These impacts could be maximised through more dedicated support on the programme to help individuals to engage colleagues when they return to their authorities and to assist with embedding the importance of performance improvement and management at the corporate centre of the organisation.

Project and Programme Management

Introduction

The project, which was designed and delivered by Roffey Park and Social Systems Innovations, aimed to develop project and programme management systems in local authorities as whole organisations, rather simply the project or programme management skills of one or two individuals. It thus aimed to develop the use of project sponsors, strengthen the project management skills of a key group of project managers and also develop processes which would join these two together and ensure organisational change. The programme also focused on 'soft' people and communication skills as much as technical project management skills. To do this the programme had four separate units which local authorities could purchase as a package of independently.

Background

The initial research behind the CBP and the White Paper both stressed the need to develop project and programme management capacity in local authorities. This programme started from several premises. The first was that it is not enough to enhance the project management skills of a small group of middle managers. Rather, the approach was to develop a commitment from senior levels of the organisation to a whole-organisation project management approach. The second premise was that project management is largely about communication and influencing skills rather than the technical aspects of the process. Specific tools, methods or documentation were to be seen as facilitators supporting the project, a secondary concern, rather than the sole focus of project management. The third premise was that traditional training courses encountered many barriers to realising organisational change of the sort that the CBP envisioned, in particular the relatively small impact that any one individual returning from a training course can have. As such the programme included a strong emphasis on building people skills and developing a 'coalition for change' within the organisation, targeting as wide a group of staff from as wider range of the hierarchy as possible.

Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the programme were to enable organisations and managers to:

- assess the state of project management in their organisation,
- put in place strategies that have been proven to improve programme and project management and governance;
- scope and steer projects more effectively;
- assess and manage risk;
- identify and manage the tensions between projects and 'business as usual';
- manage stakeholder expectations and improve community consultation;
- use project management tools and techniques more effectively;
- lead project teams in achieving desired results; and
- share knowledge, best practice and expertise.

Project delivery

The programme is structured around four separate units:

- **Healthcheck** – this unit, costing £4500 plus VAT, included a diagnostic process to identify problems in project and programme management through visits from the programme team. The result was a short report with feedback to key individuals and groups, including the senior management team and a list of recommendations for the next steps.
- **Project and Programme Sponsors Workshop** – a one day unit costing £235 plus VAT per person. The workshop was aimed at senior managers with oversight of project management and delivery. The unit explored common conditions for failure and success and the role of senior officers in the project management process. It also covered understanding the dynamics when managing the introduction of project management procedures. It aimed to develop increased senior level ownership of projects, to strengthen the alignment of
- **Project managers workshop** – this is two day workshop costing £670 plus VAT per person. The unit was aimed at anyone with direct responsibility for project management. The focus of this course was on the systems, behavioural and technical elements of successful programme and project management, including: research evidence, managing the tension between projects and day-to-day work, planning tools and techniques, financial management, contractor management, team performance; and developing creativity in teams.
- **Project manager's clinic** – a one day unit, costing £200 per person. The aim of the unit was to build the 'coalition for change' by spreading participation in the training process to a larger group of staff and transferring knowledge and learning between teams and departments.

The programme has suffered from slow take-up. The providers had only achieved a turnover of around a fifth of the projected turnover from the programme, meaning that sustaining it was becoming difficult. The providers attributed slow take-up to a range of factors, including:

- Lack of access to right people in the authorities.
- Director-level buy-in has been difficult to get and sustain as project and performance management are often seen as 'techie' and middle management rather than senior or strategic management issues.
- There is also a problem in generating the sort of scale of take-up that is needed to generate impact in individual local authorities.
- The programme and subsidies had been targeted at low performing authorities which might have slowed take-up as these authorities often experience additional barriers to take-up.
- The subsidy itself might have slowed take-up as a result of the programme being seen as 'too cheap'.

This has meant that the providers had spent a large amount of time and resources on marketing and promotions, often without much successful. The providers were frustrated at this. Because no resources had been budgeted for in the contract with central government, there was some confusion over

who should have had responsibility for marketing and promotions, with both central government and the provider reporting that the other party could have invested more resource and commitment to this.

There were also reported difficulties with the governance arrangements for the programme. While the members of the project steering group were thought to have been committed and helpful, they had been unable to access central government resources.

Reasons for participating

Because of the relatively low level of take-up of the programme, only two of our case study authorities had participated in the programme. They had different reasons for participating. In one case study, the authority had been criticised in subsequent Corporate Governance Inspection and Corporate Performance Assessment for its lack of a project and programme management process in the authority. Following the agreement of a Council Improvement Plan, which highlighted performance management as one area of capacity building to be undertaken, respondents believed that they had been 'told' that they should engage with the programme, though no documentary evidence was available. Certainly, they had the impression that participation on the programme was a condition for central government support, though it was unclear whether this was simply a misunderstanding of the subsidy available on the one hand and the broader arrangements in relation to Direct Support, which the authority was also in receipt of. In the other case study, senior officers had simply seen marketing material and identified a fit between the programme and a capacity building need within the authority.

Experience of participating

All beneficiary respondents reported broadly positive experiences from participating on the programme. Facilitators were thought to be knowledgeable and well prepared and delivered material in an effective and open way.

Each of the authorities had participated in different ways. In one authority, the intention had been to buy-in to the whole package of support and use the different modules of the programme to slowly 'build the coalition for change'. However, it had proven difficult to sustain the required level of commitment. The final clinic event had been intended for around 50 people in the authority, but in the event only 15 attended. This was not felt by the beneficiaries to have been due to any fault with the provider or with the programme but was caused by the existing culture of apathy toward training and development in the organisation, something that has been challenged since through other initiatives. In the second case study, several events had been held and these were thought to have been useful, but they did not on their own result in changed processes. Rather, they contributed to the authority's decision to commission further work from different consultants to strengthen their project management procedures.

Impact
General
The provider undertakes general 'happy sheet' evaluation and reported that this is generally good, though no evidence was offered to corroborate this. No additional evaluation, such as tracking of participants and wider organisational change is planned and it was never part of the programme plan.

Individual
Individual beneficiaries did report that they learnt new skills and there was some indication that they will have been able to use these in the workplace. The main individual level impacts were though thought to be limited to an increasing commitment and awareness of project management issues among senior level managers. Where individuals had participated it was thought that they would have gained confidence in the use of project management skills but evidence of harder skills acquisition and impact was less easy to identify.

Organisational
In one case study, two teams were particularly impacted by the programme, subsequently adopting revised project management procedures for specific projects underway at the time. Again, at least part of the causality for this was attributed to the programme, though they were both willing and committed to begin with.

The main barriers to achieving wider team and organisational impacts were the failure of the organisation to secure wide enough commitment to the programme (for instance attendance at the clinic event). The existing organisational culture of apathy toward training and development opportunities were suggested as a reason for this failure. This culture was augmented by time pressures resulting from multiple improvement and intervention projects at the time. For those that did participate, there were thought to be additional barriers to change, such as a lack of formal processes to share the benefits of individual development activity and weaknesses in management competencies around communication, coaching and sharing of learning. Again, there were cultural issues to be tackled.

Participation had not led to changed project or programme procedures in either of the case studies, though both had taken the decision to secure additional support to implement changed processes, partly as a result of participation on the programme. The providers did suggest that in a small number of participating authorities, the impact had been more significant. However, they also confirmed the findings in the case studies that securing these wider organizational benefits were made more difficult by a lack of organizational commitment and buy-in to the programme.

Cost Effectiveness
Despite the subsidy arrangements in place, respondents in both case study authorities reported that the programme was expensive. In one case further work on project management was being procured from a cheaper local

alternative and in the other it was being sourced from an existing private sector partner. In either case the provider was already known to the council.

Policy linkages

The programme was not formally or consciously linked to any wider policy agenda, though supporting generic management skills is linked to the Pay and Workforce Strategy.

Conclusions

The Project and Programme Management programme has not been well taken up by the sector. Given the low level of existing take-up, it is questionable whether this programme can be maintained in the context of changes to the funding and subsidy arrangements.

The level of take-up is perhaps surprising because the programme is well designed and appears 'on paper' to address many of the problems that this research has identified in relation to staff training and organisational development in relation to project management. For instance, the different components of the programme address different audiences within the authority with the appropriate level of information. Project managers themselves are offered harder skills training whereas senior figures in the authority are encouraged to see the importance of senior level oversight and commitment to projects. The programme also acknowledges the need to tailor the programme to the specific needs of each client authority and to build a supportive coalition for change in the organisation to ensure that individual level development is allowed to translate to organisational change. However, respondents reported that the programme appeared to be expensive to them and they struggled to generate the level of internal commitment that is necessary for such a programme. This suggests that the providers may be correct that the programme might have been better marketed as a 'stretch' programme to assist already high performing authorities. However, if that were to be the case, further consideration of the cost base may still be required.

Despite changes to the funding system the role of the Improvement Partnerships in establishing joint mechanisms might actually help this programme in the future. There is certainly evidence to suggest that joint work on project management, including the development of shared project management processes would be desirable for regional and sub-regional groupings of local authorities in the course of designing and delivering shared services. Common approaches to project management are also desirable in the context of the increased focus on partnership delivery of outcome targets. As such, there is scope to market the programme to Improvement Partnerships. However, discussions with providers suggest that initial negotiations with Improvement Partnerships have made slow progress.

Councillor Mentoring

Introduction
The Councillor Mentoring programme is a continuation of the activities under the Peer Clearing House. It offers a number of mentoring options as a means of placing elected member peers trained, accredited and brokered through the Peer Clearing House. The project thus drew on the background work behind the Peer Clearing House including the development of learning models, political skills sets and councillor competencies. It widened the offer and forms of support available from elected member peers.

Background
The Peer Clearing House was viewed as successful in brokering the placement of elected member peers in local authorities to improve shared learning and self-support within the local government sector. The development of the Councillor Mentoring programme was intended to expand the scope of mentoring activities in local authorities.

Participants on the programme understood the concept of capacity to apply at both organisational and individual level. At organisational level councillors generally understand the concept as relating to the resources, skills and knowledge needed to operate effectively and deliver quality services. At individual level the term is applied to training and learning to develop skills, work-based competencies and leadership. Councillors generally recognised the relationship between capacity at organisational and individual level.

Although councillors had a sufficient grasp of the concept of capacity, their awareness of the National Capacity Building Programme was low. Nearly all councillors interviewed said they had only become aware of the NCMP as a result of participating on the programme. Although councillors were unfamiliar with other initiatives under the National Programme, most were aware of the IDeA Leadership Academy, with some having previously participated in this. Overall, participants had not been previously involved in similar peer mentoring programmes in the past 2 years.

Overall, councillors recognised links between the NCMP and the national agenda around member development, ensuring that members have the capacity to undertake their work effectively. Some viewed the Programme as a tool for improving members' strategic skills, whilst others feel it is most closely linked to local government efficiency and the important part that effective leadership has to play within achieving this.

Aims and objectives
The programme had the following aims and objectives:

- investing in mentoring as a prime means of building political capacity, to support the process of recovery and improvement in local government
- improving performance and role effectiveness i.e., individual, party and organisational – at all levels for all councillors

- complementing existing leadership and member development work and other learning strategies within the council
- increasing training development, information and support tailored to meet the particular challenges that face young councillors, women councillors and councillors from minority ethnic groups

The programme also aims to benefit mentors and mentees, building their capacity so that individual participants, the local authority and the wider local government sector all benefit.

Project delivery
The Councillor Mentoring Programme initially presented seven mentoring options to local authorities.

- **Role mentoring** – groups of councillors from within a council(s) to develop a specialist role, such as in licensing. This includes a diagnostic assessment with the Regional Associate or Regional Member Mentor followed by a process of sourcing an appropriate mentor matched to the needs of the authority/councillors. This is then followed by a planning day at which the learning agreement is developed, and two further delivery days.
- **Skills mentoring –** develops new and experienced councillor's skills as mapped against the political skills set developed by the IDeA. This includes a diagnostic assessment with the Regional Associate or Regional Member Mentor followed by a process of sourcing an appropriate mentor matched to the needs of the authority/councillors. This is then followed by a planning day at which the learning agreement is developed, and a series of training days, followed by a final review day.
- **Buddy mentoring** - involves pairing to help new councillors during their first few months with more experienced councillors in their own authority, who are also trained to undertake mentoring. It is also possible to partner with councillors from other local authorities where this is more appropriate. This includes a diagnostic assessment with the Regional Associate or Regional Member Mentor followed by a process of sourcing an appropriate mentor matched to the needs of the authority/councillors. This is then followed by a planning day at which the learning agreement is developed and a one day training course for mentors, before the buddying takes place. The process is followed by a review day.
- **Political group mentoring –** this is applied to all political parties and is thought to be particularly useful where there has been a change in political control. This includes a diagnostic assessment with the Regional Associate or Regional Member Mentor followed by a process of liaison between the council, the IDeA and DCLG. Five days of delivery are included with three of these being on site and two are by telephone.
- **One-to-one mentoring** - with councillors at all levels. It is especially relevant to councillors taking on new responsibilities or moving into new positions. There are two options to one-to-one mentoring, with one aimed at new councillors and consisting of two full days and eight half-day delivery sessions. The second option is aimed at experienced councillors, with two full and sixteen half days.

- **Executive mentoring** – specialist areas of leadership and management development delivered by external consultants. This includes a planning day plus up to sixteen half day sessions along with telephone and e-mentoring.
- **Leader mentoring** – using expertise from local and central government, private industry and the voluntary sector. This includes planning, followed by up to sixteen half days of delivery.

The programme is marketed and promoted through the IDeA generally and through the Peer Clearing House. It is also promoted through a system of Regional Member Mentors who help to identify mentoring opportunities in local authorities and help also to support authorities through the mentoring process. They are thus not involved in the actual delivery of the mentoring programme in the authority.

At the beginning of the mentoring process, the Regional Member Mentors work with the authority to identify councillor and leadership development needs and to draw up a Mentoring Agreement with each individual participant involved. This agreement covers:

- Context, role and motivation in participating in the programme.
- The individual's assessment of their development needs.
- What the specific aims and expected/desired outcomes are.
- An action plan, covering the form of mentoring to be entered into, what resources will be used and the role of mentor and mentee in the process.
- A process agreement setting out the mutual expectations of mentor and mentee throughout the process.
- A progress and final review detailing what has been achieved and areas of learning.

Mentors are supported through a peer network system and also through access to a number of resources, such as the *Practical resource for peer member mentors* (IDeA, 2006) which advises on a number of approaches and exercises that can be used in mentoring activities, including:

- Kolb model of learning
- Learning from mistakes – analysis and change
- A Learning and development preferences questionnaire
- The competence model of learning
- The johari window of understanding known and unknown weaknesses
- How others see me – an observers perspective
- Tension audit
- Time management assessment
- Communication skills audit
- Listening skills audit
- Brain power
- Radiant thinking or mind mapping
- Scenario planning or visioning
- Circles of influence diagram
- Cost benefit analysis

Following changes to the overall management and financial structure of the Programme is in the process of being redesigned.

Reasons for participating

Councillors identified a range of personal and professional development and training issues as being central to building capacity amongst elected members nationally:

- Improved induction training, particularly for newer/less experienced councillors was frequently mentioned. It is generally felt this could consist of a mixture of generic induction and tailored provision, relevant to individual authorities;
- Increased networking and use of both internal and external good practice case studies to demonstrate lessons learned (around bringing about effective service delivery and performance management);
- One senior councillor felt that a better understanding of the budget process in local government should be central to councillor capacity building activity. It was felt that training around complex income and expenditure processes would help councillors improve the way in which they work;

> *"It would make them better at dealing with local issues in that they would see how the amount of money they want for something locally actually fits in with the greater scheme of things" (Leader, Unitary Authority).*

- One councillor mentioned the importance of developing training that involves an understanding of private sector business principles. It was felt that this would be a useful tool to broaden the management and delivery experience of elected members and senior officers. Building on best practice examples from the private sector is also seen as having the potential to impact positively on a range of areas from sickness levels to procurement, and as providing a fresh perspective for local government. At one of the sample authorities work is currently been undertaken to explore the potential for sourcing a training provider with relevant experience.

With reference to exploring capacity issues in the future, some councillors felt that an evaluation of the effectiveness of member development and capacity building activity would be useful.

Councillors were made aware of the Councillor Mentoring Programme via several different means. Some mentioned having being advised of the available support by IDeA, whilst others said that they had initially heard about the Programme from members of their authority's senior management team (e.g. Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Heads of Service etc).

In some of the authorities, councillors had come to participate in the NCMP following a change in political leadership. Examples of this were given by the Council Leaders at authorities, which had been Labour-controlled for long

periods until the last local elections. In these instances, it was felt that the Programme would offer useful support to newly elected councillors, helping them adjust to the transition to leadership.

Feedback also suggests that some councillors came to participate on the NCMP as a result of problems at their authorities. For example; one council had experienced considerable political and organizational difficulties, and the Programme was suggested as a means of support to the new Leader. In another instance, an elected member's portfolio area was subject to an unsatisfactory Composite Governance Inspection (CGI) and subsequent poor CPA result. In consultation with the authority's senior management team and the IDeA it was felt that using a peer mentor would be beneficial (in sharing best practice around performance management and service delivery), and would support the recovery process.

In most cases, a decision was made for the whole Cabinet/Executive to participate in the Councillor Mentoring Programme, however, in one instance; mentors were assigned to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive only.

The selection process was highlighted as a fundamental part of the Programme. The background, interests, experience and portfolio areas of mentors were felt to be vital in assuring an appropriate match with participating councillors, and therefore ensuring the NCMP is effective. This point is highlighted by one elected member who commented:

> "It's about getting the right people from the right authorities with the right background, who match with the individuals. This mentoring process only works if you have the right personalities and individuals who can communicate with each other and have respect for each other…" (Leader, Unitary Council).

Councillors feel it is imperative that mentors have significant experience and understanding of managing budgets and service areas on a similar scale, and outlined the importance of being matched with a mentor from a like-authority (e.g. matching county with county, district with district, unitary with unitary). In a few cases, councillors from county and unitary councils had been assigned a mentor from a district council and felt this had been a mismatch. This was felt to be particularly unhelpful as councillors from district authorities were seen to have less in common in terms of budgets, service remits or of dealing with diverse social issues on a comparable scale to their colleagues from county and unitary authorities. An illustration of this was given by a councillor whose portfolio covered a County Fire & Rescue Service, and was assigned a mentor from a District Council which had a standalone service rather than one attached to the council. This was felt to be a significant mismatch. Differences were felt in terms of discussions around budget issues, operational and HR issues, and therefore advice provided by the mentor *"was of limited relevance"*.

One councillor who felt his authority's mentoring experience had been a success partly attributed this to having been assigned to a mentor from a compatible council. (In this case, both authorities were unitary authorities. The sample authority was about to embark on a restructure of its LEA, perceived by the Leader to be its biggest challenge. In this case a mentor was assigned a mentor from a similar, urban council which had gone through this process and was able to advise and share lessons from the experience).

General experience of being an elected member, an understanding of *"running a council in all its aspects"* and of local authority decision-making, performance management and delivery were also seen as a vital characteristic needed by mentors to support participants effectively, (particularly in providing support to those who were newly elected councillors).

All councillors agreed on the importance of ensuring that mentors had relevant understanding their portfolio area. As one councillor pointed out:

> *"There would be no point getting somebody with no knowledge of, say, social services and assigning them as a mentor to someone whose portfolio is in that area"* (Councillor, County Council).

Political compatibility was generally felt to be an important aspect in selecting and assigning mentors. Nearly all councillors felt it was important that they shared political interests and the vision of a similar policy direction with their mentor.

> *"We were matched up with people from our own party; you can't just cast that to one side…"* (Leader, Unitary Council).

Interestingly, however, one councillor felt that lessons in decision making and policy development could be learned in spite of party differences, and felt that ensuring compatibility by authority (e.g. matching like for like) was more important.

Feedback suggests that the way in which mentors were selected and assigned may have differed from area to area. It is apparent that the IDeA have been instrumental in advising, and helping the Cabinet to choose appropriate mentors. In some areas Councillors described a process where information or CVs of potential mentors had been circulated and interviews were used to look at personalities to ensure a good match between potential mentor and recipient. In a minority of cases, councillors said they had felt remote from the selection process, and feel they had simply been assigned a mentor, rather than being given the opportunity to choose. Some members commented that they had not been involved in any kind of selection process, and had known little or nothing about their mentor prior to their first meeting.

"There was a lack of input from us in the first place. We were given our mentor and that was it" (Councillor, Unitary Council).

"It would have been good to have had more input into what kind of help I thought I needed and from whom" (Councillor, County Council).

Personality matching was also mentioned as an important factor in selecting and assigning mentors - some councillors had experienced a better relationship with their mentors than others, and at one council it was felt there had been some initial teething problems around difficulties in matching councillors and mentors appropriately.

"I think it got off to a bad start, the people they were matching us with were not the right people; I think they have overcome that problem now" (Leader, Unitary Council).

In one instance, a councillor felt that some mentors assigned to his Authority had been "inconsistent". Some mentors were seen to be enthusiastic and helpful, whilst others were perceived as being less committed, leading to the question of whether their involvement was motivated more by financial incentive than from the desire to any learning, development or mentoring issues.

"When we started this a few years ago it was just a few blokes and women who wanted to be mentors with the IDeA, but when you got past the CV and met them initially there wasn't the commitment from them" (Councillor, Unitary Council).

Experience of Participating

Most councillors participated in NCMP with the initial expectation that it would support them to carry out their roles as councillors as effectively as possible. Some initially felt the Programme could provide support around performance management and decision-making. Others originally expected that their mentor would act as a 'critical friend' and 'sounding board' for ideas, and would provide impartial, good practice advice around policy development, leadership and delivery.

"I didn't think there was any harm in getting an outside view – a sort of 'sanity check' on whether the measures we had in place were likely to produce the results we were after" (Councillor, County Council).

In councils which saw a change in political control it was particularly felt that the Programme would support less experienced and newly elected councillors to develop skills around people management, team working, and understanding the needs of a large organisation. It was envisaged that such support would encourage newly elected Cabinet/Executive Members to work *"in the same direction".* Some councillors said they initially expected that having a mentor would be a useful confidence boost both individually and collectively.

Participating on the Councillor Mentoring Programme was also, in some cases expected to provide support to senior councillors. At one Authority the

Leader of the Council talked about how he had made the challenging transition from Deputy Leader to Leader, and envisaged that his mentor would have be able to provide advice and insight where needed.

Although initial expectations of the NCMP were generally positive, in a few instances councillors said they had been sceptical about the Programme from the outset, and had not envisaged or expected any kind of benefit.

Impact
General
Although councillors feel that the NCMP generally supports team working, effective leadership, decision-making and problem solving, it is not felt to have directly contributed to a change in organisational cultures/values. Newly elected councillors felt it that changes in political control were more likely to have an impact upon organisational culture than the NCMP.

Nearly all participants said they would recommend the programme to councillors in other authorities. In some cases Council Leaders who participated have been involved in networking and seminars to talk to peers about their experiences and lessons learned from the NCMP:

> *"I've done a few seminars telling colleagues from other authorities; 'this is a very worthwhile exercise, you should be picking it up" (Leader, County Council)*

In a few of cases, councillors expressed dissatisfaction with the Programme. Key reasons given for this included lack of impact or interest, perceived poor value for money and the lack of involvement in the process of selecting mentors. It was on these grounds that councillors who were dissatisfied said that they would not recommend the Programme to peers in other authorities. One councillor described it as a *"pointless exercise",* another felt that he was sufficiently experienced, did not feel the need for support, advice, mentoring or assistance, and perceived the programme as *"going through the motions".* In another example a newly elected councillor felt that the Programme had been too generic, and that in his case, mentoring with specific emphasis upon his portfolio area would have been more valuable.

Interestingly, those councillors who were less positive about the NCMP were more likely to have expressed dissatisfaction with member training and development in general. There was some feeling that councillor training and development programmes are too generic, and that more effort needs to be invested into tailoring initiatives to fit the needs of individual councillors and their authorities. Those dissatisfied with the NCMP and with member development in general felt the Programme is delivered in a "top down" fashion, with a tendency for Councillors to be told rather than asked to participate in training.

> *"It's confirmed my views about some of the development training that is provided. I think it fairly unstructured, one size fits all…you're told what*

you're having and to like it. I don't think that's the way to do it"
(Councillor, County Council).

…"it needs better presentation. At the moment it's quite a top down,
'nanny state' prescriptive kind of process… (Councillor, County Council).

"We're told 'everybody on the Executive must go on training', which gets
people's backs up and makes them think 'why should I go on that?'…it's
very 'We'll tell you what you need to do'; and people are past that"
(Councilor, Unitary Council).

One interviewee felt that the Programme was unnecessary; having expressed
a view that that he was sceptical about capacity building initiatives for
councillors, and that there is currently

…"too much time spent on member training and member development…
we do seem to spend an awful lot of time and money spent on seminars
on ethics, governance and diversity are useful, which I think we all
subscribe to, but we don't need to sit for hours listening to someone
telling us how to be honest" (Councillor, County Council).

There was also some feeling that provision of the NCMP had not been
spread widely enough. Some interviewees felt that offering support to more
backbench councillors (in addition to Cabinet/Executive Members) could in
the long run, have a greater impact on member development and the
capacity of authorities to deliver.

A number of suggestions were made as to how the Councillor Mentoring
Programme could be improved. Some councillors felt that an increased
emphasis on case study visits to peer and other strong performing authorities
would be of practical benefit, and would support the good practice element
of the Programme. One councillor suggested that assigning more than one
peer could also be of use:

"I think that just one peer isn't that good, you can almost exhaust what
they're going to tell you in one or two meetings" (Councillor, County
Council).

Individual

Overall, most councillors felt that the Programme had given them greater
confidence in their generic leadership skills and had in some cases provided
them with advice or information directly related to their portfolio areas. Most
councillors (particularly the newly elected) felt that individual engagement
with a mentor was useful in building their confidence to take decisions, and
in providing advice around day to day tasks to help them perform their roles
as effectively as possible.

Councillors commented on how they felt the Programme had improved
internal and external communication. Referring to internal communication,
councillors recognised the importance of developing effective relationships

with local government officers. One Council Leader felt that in the past there has been a tendency in local authorities for members and officers to operate as separate entities: …*"traditionally there's been a 'Members' Club' and an Officers' Club'"*. (Leader, Unitary Council). It was felt that the ability to build working relationships with officers was related to *"being seen to be, and recognised as a confident and capable group by the Senior Management Team"*. (Leader, Unitary Council). Related to this point, some councillors feel that the NCMP has increased their confidence and ability to engage with officers and challenge managers about the service deliver, outputs and results. (One Council Leader commented on an indirect link between the NCMP and improved communication and accountability between members and officers).

With reference to external communication, most councillors felt the NCMP had encouraged them to become more involved in networking with other authorities to gain more insight into effective service provision, policy development and performance management.

It could be suggested that the NCMP has also had some role in encouraging councillors to share their own authorities' successes with others. Several councillors said that they had visited other authorities. At three authorities, councillors mentioned sharing best practice via visits to other areas through informal networks they had built regionally and nationally. Some councillors also mentioned having invited peers from other authorities to showcase their own services.

Most councillors who participated on the NCMP felt that having a mentor had presented a fresh viewpoint to the ways they approached their work. Most felt that the opportunity to engage with a mentor provided the opportunity to talk through problems or the feasibility of ideas, and benefit from impartial advice.

> …*"it's useful to think you could see your mentor a while from now, mention an idea to him, and he might then tell you that's a good idea, but suggest a different way of going about it" (Leader, Unitary Council).*

Advice around policy development and service delivery was considered extremely useful. Most participants said their mentor had been able to provide practical advice by sharing experiences and lessons about comparable issues and services in their own authorities. In most cases it was felt that a mutually beneficial relationship had been developed between the mentors and recipients. As pointed out by several councillors, the Programme had been a useful form of 'knowledge transfer' allowing both mentors and recipients to share and pass on examples of what works in developing policies and decision-making.

> *"In some cases they were able to take away ideas and systems that we've been using in this authority" (Leader, Country Council).*

Most councillors mentioned having had three or more scheduled one-to-one sessions with their mentors. Although scheduled mentoring sessions

between councillors and mentors have been completed, most participants on the Programme maintained a positive relationship with their mentor, with most saying they feel they would be able to contact their mentor to share ideas or ask for advice if needed at any time.

> *"…one of the big advantages is you've still got these people about…you have a relationship with an individual that you can speak to test ideas against" (Leader, County Council).*

Organisational
Councillors feel it is difficult to comment at this stage on whether the Programme has directly improved planning and performance management processes. Similarly, it is also felt to be too early to gauge whether the Councillor Mentoring has directly impacted on service improvement. It is felt that any impact directly related to participation on the Programme and the learning experience would potentially, be more evident in the long-term future.

Whilst the NCMP has been useful in supporting and developing elected members, it was not felt to have had any significant impact upon wider teams or departments, however, most councillors do felt that commitment to increasing councillor capacity does contribute to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of their authorities.

Most councillors felt that the NCMP encouraged them to learn from good practice examples taken from mentors' authorities in relation to team working, policy development, service delivery and performance management. Some councillors felt being given examples of different and effective ways of working would, in the future, encourage them to take a more innovative approach to their work.

Having participated on the NCMP, most councillors are able draw upon good relationships they developed with mentors and benefit from mentors' advice and insight outside the Programme. This was outlined by some as being the most useful element of the Programme.

Although the NCMP may not have made a direct contribution, there is information to suggest it may have encouraged members to consider the methods and processes they use in forward planning. Several councillors felt that involvement in the programme has significantly improved their 'strategic skills', described by one interviewee as:

> *"The ability to be analytical and think long term, which some people may not have previously had to do" (Councillor, Unitary Council).*

Similarly, one newly elected councillor felt the Programme had helped to highlight the point that policy development and implementation in local authorities is a long term process and had encouraged councillors to think about the impact of local decisions from several perspectives – feasibility, financial, quality of life for local communities.

One authority recently used a mentor to facilitate and advise at a forward planning session for the Executive Group. The away-day, concerned with future policy development and service delivery for the local area for the medium to long term future (3 – 20 years), encouraged councillors to consider their future vision for the Borough and what measures would have to be put in place to achieve this. Feedback from the event was translated into a working action plan for the authority.

At one unitary authority, participation on the Programme has reinforced the importance of councillor capacity building. In this case the NCMP is felt to have has influenced the development of an internal councillor training programme, which includes a standard induction programme, a "Member Training Manual" subject-specific sessions and refresher courses covering areas such as IT, presentation, organizational skills and day to day management.

Cost Effectiveness

Councillors viewed the working relationships they developed with mentors as having long-term value (via on-going support and advice on an informal basis outside the Programme, and through the potential for mutual learning), and similarly most felt that opportunities for networking and sharing good practice were also extremely valuable.

Despite recognizing value gained from the programme, across the board it was felt that at this stage it is not possible to measure the cost effectiveness of the NCMP, or to quantify any cost savings made as a result.

It is apparent that Capacity Building Programme funding has been integral in allowing councillors to participate on the Programme. Councillors agree it is unlikely their authorities would have engaged on the NCMP without CBP funding. In most cases recipients were aware that subsidies had been received to participate on the programme, but were unsure of the exact figure. In the case of one unitary authority, one councillor estimated that around £80,000 had been allocated for the NCMP. One authority mentioned having made a contribution to member training, however, across the board it was felt that participation in the programme would not have been possible without receipt of financial help.

Councillors who were critical of the Programme generally perceived that the were less convinced that it had provided any value for money, or that it would prove to be cost effective. One councillor described it as *"More or less a total waste of money"*. (Councillor, Unitary Council). In this case it was felt that better value for money could have been achieved by undertaking a training needs analysis and sourcing local or regional providers to deliver.

Policy linkages

Councillors agree that the NCMP is linked to themes around efficiency and the Local Government Modernisation Agenda. It was generally felt that equipping cuncillors to be more effective leaders would make contribution

to the overall efficiency of services and lead to performance improvements. It was felt that links between the Programme and other policy agendas (e.g. equality and diversity, sustainability and the shared priorities) were less obvious.

Organisational Development

Introduction

There are two distinct phases of this programme. The first phase involved compiling a resource document which is a toolkit for local authorities. '*An Organisational Development Resource Document for Local Government'* has been developed by Solace Enterprises and Swiftwork collaboratively which was published in November 2005. It is intended that the second phase of the programme will begin in 2006 and involves providing assistance for Regional Action Learning Sets which will also be piloted in the South-East. A dedicated e-learning tool/website will also be created to promote Organisational Development (OD) and related issues during the second phase of this programme. In addition to this there are a number of initiatives planned for regional based activities which will be targeted through Regional Directors and/or Improvement Partnerships and Solace/SOCPO branches.

Background

The demands on local government are constantly shifting, driven by user expectations and various government initiatives such as CPA and efficiency targets. Local authorities are changing and adapting to embrace continuous change in order to maintain their relevance and quality of service but the changes now facing the public sector are more complex still and need a variety of solutions. Using OD techniques, councils are able to explore more transformational approaches to change and ready themselves for a new era or networked local governance and greater user choice and involvement.

OD is concerned with making the entire organisation fitter for purpose; it does not focus solely on discrete services or teams but treats the whole organisation. It treats causes rather them the symptoms. Some very important distinctions between OD and development in an organisation are highlighted in the resource document for this programme (Solace Enterprises& Swiftwork, 2005), OD favours:

- dealing with causes over dealing with symptoms;
- working with whole systems rather than parts of them;
- changes in culture over changes in changes of behaviour; and
- change of system over a changes in a system.

Aims and Objectives

The overall objectives of this programme were set out in 'An Organisational Development Resource Document for Local Government' (Solace Enterprises & Swiftwork, 2005) which follow:

- To promote the OD Resource Document to Councils (as well as other public sector organisations) as a means of creating improved performance and organisational change.
- To engage chief executives, senior managers and elected members in understanding the role of OD.
- To raise awareness of the tools and techniques available.
- To increase the capacity of the local government HR community to use OD techniques in their organisation.
- To ensure that links are maintained with other capacity building programmes.

Project Delivery

The programme of activities includes the continued promotion of the OD Resource Document '*An Organisational Development Resource Document for Local Government'* through existing networks and publicity material to Chief Executives of local authorities. The Resource Document (Solace Enterprises & Swiftwork, 2005) presents a wide range of OD techniques and OD assessment and improvement tools and techniques. Broadly these fall into four different 'schools of thought':

- People based approaches – Organisations are best developed by developing their 'people'. If staff are well trained and well motivated and feel well treated then good organisational performance will follow.
- Quality based approaches – Organisations are best developed through rational techniques that analyse current practice and seek technical changes to bring about improvement.
- System based approaches – Organisations are seen as a set of interrelated parts and change comes from developing building awareness of the ways in which the parts relate to each other and finding ways of changing the system all at once.
- Dialogue based approaches – Organisations can't change through introspection; they are transformed through developmental conversations that happen between the organisation and its customers and partners.

In addition to this there are a number of initiatives planned for regional based activities which will be targeted through Regional Directors and/or Improvement Partnerships and Solace/SOCPO branches. The final programme of activities has not yet been finalised, however it is envisaged that they will include the following activities:

- Mini conference/workshop sessions
- Masterclass for small groups of chief executives (round table discussion facilitated by OD expert or knowledgeable chief executive)
- Just in time consultancy based on OD/change piece within existing programmes/partnerships e.g. North West Improvement Network (NWIN)

- Train "Hit Squads" as local advisors who can go into councils and help diagnose/respond to key issues using the OD techniques. Hit squad will be HR people and managers from local authorities who can use expertise gained through training in their own council and as part of a regional initiative help support other councils promoting networking and shared development.

There will also be targeted support for newly appointed chief executives within individual councils offering consultancy in support of their change programme or as a diagnostic based on the OD document with the resulting developments/experience being written up as a case study/used as the basis for further publicity/promotion etc.

A skills development programme will also be made available for senior managers and/or HR practitioner to develop an understanding of OD, what makes it work, the tools/techniques and creating outcomes and awareness sessions for elected members (Solace Enterprises & Swiftwork, 2005a).

Impact
The programme providers felt that the Resource Document was received well by local authorities, although there is no real way to assess the impact of the document at this early stage. Solace Enterprises and Swiftwork are currently in discussion about commissioning a longitudinal evaluation study during Phase 2 of this programme which they consider the best approach for a programme of this nature that would take a long period of time to infiltrate into any local authority.

Policy Linkages
Equality and diversity issues are mainstreamed throughout the Resource Document for local authorities '*An Organisational Development Resource Document for Local Government*' however; no specific policy linkages are identified. OD is about making organisations more efficient and sustainable in the long term therefore the programme relates to the efficiency agenda.

Conclusions
The content of the Organisational Development manual is appropriate to the achievement of its objectives. However, no information was available on the level of take-up or how the further planned activities will impact on the sector.

The Local Government Leadership Centre

Introduction
The Local Government Leadership Centre works with local authorities in England to develop the quality of leadership their political leaders and senior officers. The Leadership Centre works with local authorities through three distinct programmes of work. Common to each of these is what the Leadership Centre promotes as its unique feature: development work on the relationship between elected leaders and senior officers. The centre was

announced in July 2004 with work in two pilot areas, the Southwest and Yorkshire and Humberside. The centre has been fully operational since April 2005.

Background
The Leadership Centre was the result of several years of discussion between the main bodies involved in local government. Several strands of thinking had identified the need for support for leadership development in the sector, including the conclusions of the Leadership Development Commission which recommended that the Leadership Centre be established.

The rationale for the establishment of the Leadership Centre was thus a "perceived market failure in an increasing[ly] complicated local government arena" (Local Government Leadership Centre, 2006:5):

> *"It was perceived that insufficient leadership development was being sought in respect of senior members and officers. Where this was occurring, it was in such a number of disparate ways that major suppliers were not gearing their approach to address this particular need. This caused a lack of confidence and belief from buyers in authorities who rejected continually educating expensive providers in the working of local government at their own expense." (Local Government Leadership Centre, 2006:5).*

The Leadership Centre commissioned survey research from MORI in 2005 which identified problems in the supply of leadership development. In particular, it identified that providers did not understand the sector and its needs that they avoided providing development to political leaders and that the overall quality of provision was highly variable in quality.

Aims and objectives
The principle aims and objectives of the Leadership Centre are to correct the market failure in relation to leadership on both the supply and the demand side. On the supply side, the Centre aims to develop and regulate provision through the establishment of an approved list of suppliers. The Centre also aims to lead the debate on the notion of leadership

Project Delivery
The Leadership Programme has five main themes of programme delivery. The first involves leading on the debate on leadership. Several aspects of programme delivery have been associated with this. For instance, the Leadership Centre has published two documents on the role of leadership in local government. The first *Civic Leadership for a new Century* (2005) was based on fieldwork with local authorities and identifies ten key messages about leadership:

- The need to recognise that councils are political organizations and that there is a limit to the applicability of managerialist solutions.
- Recent years had seen a significant investment in management development without a corresponding investment in political leadership development.

- The role of backbench councillors has not yet been fully resolved in the new council structures and the quality of overview and scrutiny processes are inconsistent.
- Community leadership is too simplistic a term when in reality there is no single community, but many, each with different interests. Mediation and the resolution of tension and conflict between these interests is thus a key challenge.
- Despite a clear shift in policy emphasis toward councils delivering in partnership with other organizations, the levels of councillor engagement with other political structures has declined.
- The need for more recognition of the amount of work, time and resources that go into partnership working and the need to support this.
- Councils need to be better in communicating with their staff and local communities to help to sustain a sense of place and to generate confidence in the local political process.
- There is a need to find ways to resolve tensions between national and local priorities while avoiding the development of 'post code' lotteries.
- The need for a new accommodation of the political/managerial relationship between leaders and chief executives that recognises the different priorities of each, including the need to balance local political priorities with the demands made of local authorities by central government to achieve centrally set performance targets.
- The need to reconsider the terms and conditions and workload expectations placed on councillors.

The Centre has also published a manifesto on local leadership (2006a) which picks out eight key points from the analysis above, including the need to develop leadership in its context, the need to work on relationships between on individuals in top teams, the need to focus leadership externally as well as internally and the need to develop flexible and responsive approaches to leadership.

The second major stream of activity is around work with individual political groups. There are three themes to this work, all of which are fully subsidised through CBP funding:

- **Civic Pride** – recognises that a change in political control is a key point of weakness in political leadership, with new ruling groups often feeling pressured into taking rapid decisions that are often better taken with a degree of consideration, such as a change in Chief Executive. Civic Pride thus involves identifying where there may be a change in political control. An experienced political mentor from the Peer Clearing House is appointed to work with the potential new ruling group.
- **Next Generation** – recognises the need to support new councillors, especially against the evidence that many people never serve beyond their first term. This is a year long programme of support to help new councillors settle into their new role and identify potential opportunities for progression. This work was still in the design stage at the time of writing this report.

- **Attracting talent** – recognises the need to attract new councillors. The project is still in its design phase and has encountered difficulties in attempting to get support from political parties.

A third theme of activities is referred to as 'Leeds Castle' and is targeted at high profile leaders in the local government sector. Three cohorts of development activity are planned, each with around twenty local government leaders (ten chief executives and ten leaders). Each cohort will receive eight months of development support with three periods of contact consisting of largely scenario based discussions. The contact time will also involve a visit to a major European city to act as a live case study. The aim is not only to develop the individuals at the top of local government leadership but to generate lessons about how to cope with future changes to the sector. This activity will be part funded but will also involve a user-fee. There is also the possibility of attracting sponsorship.

The fourth theme of activity, developing the supplier market, is much more developed. This work has two levels. The first has involved establishing a database of leadership development suppliers to the local government sector. In order to be listed on the database a provider has to have two referees from local authorities with which they have worked. The second level is a small number of approved suppliers. Over one hundred and fifty organisations applied to be on this list. The selection process which included an application, selection for interview and presentation meant that only eight were subsequently placed on this list. A further ten are in the process of developing their services offer before re-applying.

The fourth theme of activity is referred to as 'local leadership projects' of which around a hundred are now underway in one form or another. These projects consist of three main phases:

- Initiation – a discussion is initiated with the authority over the development of a local leadership project.
- Exploration – a decision has been made to progress and an adviser has been appointed to explore the council's leadership development needs and identify how these might best be resolved. The outcome is the development of an action plan.
- Implementation – the authority has identified its leadership development needs and is in the process of addressing them through implementing the action plan.

The advisers are trained and accredited and are high profile figures from local government, academia or business. The notion behind this work is that the leadership of the organisation requires effective working relationships between the leader and chief executive and between the entire Senior Management Team and the cabinet. Take-up has so far been strong but at the moment all places are fully subsidised by the Leadership Centre's core funding which comes from the CBP.

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