Update on capacity building programme and Regional Centres of Excellence

Issued by:
Gillian Verrall, Fire and Resilience Policy Division

Addressed to:
The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer

Please forward to:
Finance Officers

Summary
This circular provides details of the role of Regional Centres of Excellence in supporting fire and rescue authorities to deliver efficiencies. It also includes an update on the arrangements for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) to access resources from the joint Local Government Association/Communities and Local Government capacity building programme.

For further information, contact:
Gillian Verrall
Fire and Resilience Policy Division
Zone 9/J10
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London, SW1E 5DU

Direct line 020 7944 4524
Fax 020 7944 5599
E-mail gillian.verrall@communities.gsi.gov.uk

General helpline 020 7944 8194
Website www.communities.gov.uk
1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 This circular is in two parts. The first part provides details of the role of Regional Centres of Excellence in supporting FRAs to deliver efficiencies. The second part gives an update on the arrangements for FRAs to access resources, via Regional Improvement Partnerships, from the joint Local Government Association/Communities and Local Government capacity building programme. The intention is for Regional Centres of Excellence and Improvement Partnerships to merge and this has already happened in some regions.

2.0 **Regional Centres of Excellence**

2.1 The Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs) support the delivery of efficiencies across local government, including the Fire and Rescue Service. The RCEs nationally provide a key link between the efficiency work of local government and similar work in the Fire and Rescue Service, particularly in the areas of non-operational procurement and corporate services. The RCEs also provide funding for certain efficiency projects.

2.2 The South West Centre of Excellence (SW RCE) takes the lead nationally in providing specific support to assist the Fire and Rescue Service deliver efficiencies. More detail about the RCEs, including practical examples of the funding they have made available to the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), together with local contact details, is contained in the bulletin which is attached as an annex to this circular.

2.3 More details about the RCE nationally can be found at: [http://www.rcoe.gov.uk](http://www.rcoe.gov.uk)

3.0 **The Capacity Building Programme**

3.1 The Department and the Local Government Association established the capacity building programme in 2003 with the aim of supporting local government to drive forward its own development. FRAs can take part in the capacity building programme by utilising the resources and expertise available through their regional improvement partnership (including applying for direct grant funding) or by taking part in national programmes.

3.2 Business Change Managers have previously provided a link for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) wishing to access the capacity building programme. Following their departure, FRAs need to take active steps in order to maximise the available support from the capacity building programme.

3.3 As new governance arrangements are put in place to make decisions on strategies and resources and the subsequent management of programmes at both a regional and sub-regional level, FRAs need to take active steps in order to maximise the available support from the capacity building programme. It is recommended that FRAs consider the issue of appropriate links and FRS representation through Regional Management Boards in the first instance and in discussion with lead officers (see paragraph 4.1 below).
Update on capacity building programme and Regional Centres of Excellence

4.0 Regional Improvement Partnerships

4.1 Regional Improvement Partnerships are now responsible for the allocation of all direct grant funding through the capacity building programme. FRAs should therefore ensure that they engage actively with their Regional Improvement Partnership in order to access available support. The lead officer contact details for each of the Regional Improvement Partnerships are available at the following link: http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1133919

5.0 Changes to the subsidy arrangement for national programmes

5.1 There is at present a central subsidy resource for the purchase of places on the following national programmes:

- Project and Programme Management;
- Future Leaders;
- Performance Management;
- National Graduate Development Programme; and
- National Councillor Mentoring programme.

The Department has recently reviewed this arrangement in consultation with the Regional Directors of Local Government Practice and the Local Government Association (LGA) and has agreed in principle that funding for the above programmes should be passed to Regional Improvement Partnerships to administer. Each of the Partnerships is currently working up their detailed proposals for consideration by the Department and the LGA. The relevant lead officer for each region’s Improvement Partnership will be able to update FRAs on the current regional position.

6.0 National programmes content and suppliers

6.1 Further information about the current national programmes and their suppliers is attached.

Gillian Verrall

Fire and Resilience Directorate
National Capacity Building Programmes Note

Project and Programme Management

Delivered by: Roffey Park & Social Systems Innovation (SSI)

Programme comprises a three day health check consultation to identify and authority’s strengths and weaknesses in service delivery together with tailored training modules aimed at officers and members to get the best out of programme and project management.

For further information visit:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1133929

Contact:
Jeff Rodrigues - ssiconsulting@btconnect.com

Future Leaders Programme

Delivered by: Office for Public Management (OPM), and Ashridge Business School

The Future Leadership Programme is a six month national programme to develop middle managers in local government and the fire and rescue service, through building leadership and management capacity. The programme is not just a typical management development programme; it aims to improve the performance and delivery of local government through concentrating on organisational development as well as increasing management capacity.

For further information visit:

www.futureleadership.gov.uk/ODPM/Homepage.htm

Contact:
Lesley Campbell -LCampbell@opm.co.uk
OPM
Direct Line 020 7239 7859
Mobile 07973 800042

Performance Management

Delivered by: Price Waterhouse Coopers, LLP, and Solace Enterprises

The Performance Improvement Programme aims to help local authorities and local partnerships to drive improvement through effective performance management. It embraces two strong elements, a series of 3 face-to-face learning and development events together with specific tailored support for your authority. Events will focus on developing the skills, behaviours and
cultures to drive and sustain continuous improvement. Learning is directly applied to your current performance issues in ‘real time’ during the events. The programme can be used to address both internal organisational performance issues and partnership performance. It involves a team of 5 per authority/partnership, creating a critical mass of improvement champions.

For further information visit:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161582

Contact: Ciara Magee
Manager
Government and Public Sector
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

Tel: 020 7212 3585
Mobile 0787 963 4250
ciara.m.magee@uk.pwc.com

National Graduate Development Programme

The ngdp vision is to recruit and develop graduates who have the potential for senior management roles within 10-15 years.

For further information:

http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=4431093

Contact: Mick James
Assistant Director - Workforce Development, Services North
Tel No. 020 7296 6501
e-mail - mick.james@lga.gov.uk

The National Councillor Mentoring Programme

Delivered by: IDeA, Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), and Association of Public Excellence (APSE)

The National Councillor Mentoring Programme has been established to support and build political leadership capacity within local authorities. It offers councils a wider range of peer mentoring activities that will continue to build capacity and support increased role effectiveness and performance of councillors at all levels.

The programme aims to benefit all parties involved in the mentoring process including the mentor. The primary aim is to build the capability of the individual mentee, so that all those involved in the outcome benefit from the scheme – the specific local authority, fellow colleagues and the wider local government sector.
For further information:

http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=433262

Contact: David Agnew
Programme Manager, Services North
Contact tel no. 07775802506
email - david.agnew@idea.gov.uk
Overview

The nine Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs) are funded by CLG to support local authorities to deliver efficiency gains. Each RCE also takes the lead in one or more efficiency workstreams on a national basis. The South West RCE (SW RCE) is the national lead for Fire and Rescue Services and this bulletin is intended to provide an update on what is being done to support this national workstream.

How can the RCEs support Fire and Rescue services?

The RCEs provide a key link between the efficiency work of local government and similar work in the Fire and Rescue services, particularly in the areas of corporate services and non-operational procurement. The RCEs also provide funding for a number of efficiency projects at a regional level.

National Context

Procurement and corporate services form an important part of anticipated efficiency gains in the Fire and Rescue service: up to 12% of all gains for 2005/06 and increasing to 19% in 2006/07. The table below shows this in more detail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2005 / 2006 Total Efficiencies*</th>
<th>2006 / 2007 Total Efficiencies*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Services</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£57.3m</td>
<td>£41.6m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Forward-looking efficiency statements

The table also shows that the contribution from corporate services is set to further increase.

RCE National Procurement Programme and corporate services programme

The nine RCEs run a number of high-profile national programmes. The National Procurement Programme focuses on gains through coordinating national spend on non-operational procurement. The corporate services programme focuses on driving good practice in business transformation in local government. Find out more at http://www.rcoe.gov.uk.

Fire and Rescue Service on-line national discussion forum

In partnership with CLG, the RCEs have set up a national on-line Fire and Rescue Service discussion forum. The forum provides an ideal opportunity to ask questions and exchange ideas specific to the Fire and Rescue Service. The forum is moderated by the SW RCE.

Registration for the on-line forum, hosted by esd-toolkit, can be found at http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolbox/Register.aspx
The Fire and Rescue Service Centre of Excellence (FRS CoE)

Although there is no official link between the RCEs and the FRS CoE, each keeps the other informed of progress to avoid duplication. The FRS CoE is mainly concerned with skills development and leadership in the FRS, whereas the RCEs are delivering efficiency programmes in local government.

RCEs offer practical levels of support for FRS

Most RCEs have been individually supporting and funding FRS initiatives within their regions, often involving substantial investments. Typical examples of these initiatives include:

- Free of charge participation in regional spend analysis (SW, SE, NE RCEs)
- FRS regional procurement manager and network (East of England RCE)
- FRS regional procurement card programme (SW RCE)
- Contracts and relationship management, strategic supplier intelligence initiatives (London RCE)
- Performance management programme (East Midlands RCE)
- Stores rationalisation (West Midlands RCE)

Review of FRS
Common and Specialist Services – East Midlands

Commissioned by the East Midlands Regional Management Board, the local RCE has provided funding for a review of common services in the East Midlands regional area. The review will particularly focus on models for future delivery of these services. Nottinghamshire FRS is leading the review and it is intended that the results will be available nationally.

Due to the way that Nottinghamshire FRS have tendered the study, the same review will be available to other regions at a much reduced rate in the March 2007 timeframe.

How to contact your local RCE

Most RCEs have a FRS representative on their regional Management Board. Please contact your local RCE either directly using the key RCE contacts below or through the SW RCE.

To find out more about the RCEs nationally and in your region go to http://www.rcoe.gov.uk/.

Key RCE contacts:

- Julian Morley, South West RCE, j.morley@dorsetcc.gov.uk  Fire and Rescue lead
- Dr Andrew Larner, South East RCE, andrew.larner@sece.gov.uk
- Andy Hancox, West Midlands RCE, ahancox@wmcoe.gov.uk
- Chris Allison, East Midlands RCE, chris.allison@nottscc.gov.uk
- Colin Cram, North West RCE, colin.cram@tameside.gov.uk
- David Wright, North East RCE, davidwright@gateshead.gov.uk
- Ken Cole, London RCE, ken.cole@alg.gov.uk
- Mike Worron, East of England RCE, michael.worron@norfolk.gov.uk
- Tony Wiltshire, Y&H RCE, tony.wiltshire@leeds.gov.uk