

HRD Network

Development of a People Management Improvement Framework (PMIF) for Local Government

Underpinning Principles

The PMIF should be:

- Developed and reviewed on a partnership basis with the HRD Network
- Appropriate to the statutory role of the WAO while remaining flexible to legitimate individual authority differences
- Based on trust, a culture of "no surprises" and mutual challenge
- Mutually beneficial to WAO and local authorities, supporting the identification and promotion of excellence in workforce matters
- Underpinned by shared learning and continuous improvement
- Sensitive to the current context of local authority workforce issues
- Instrumental in raising the profile of local government workforce issues

More specifically:

That the PMIF should:

- Clearly differentiate between the role of the HR function and managers' role in managing and developing people
- Enable individual organisations to self-evaluate their people-related performance and to continuously improve their people management and development capabilities
- Be capable of reflecting the service delivery priorities and culture of each individual organisation rather than a blanket focus on 'best practice'
- Recognise that most if not all frontline and support services will be subject to significant change over the next two years, and beyond
- Take into account that each individual organisation must be agile in terms of its approach to workforce issues and that the role of the WAO in supporting "improvement" must reflect this requirement
- focus on the achievement of key workforce outcomes which are directly related to assisting authorities to deliver their own respective organisational priorities - how such outcomes are achieved may look different in each Authority,
- Be able to be used not only within local government in Wales but also across the whole of the Welsh Public Sector

Suggested Framework:

The framework should clearly differentiate between an assessment of the HR service and the issues for which it has direct responsibility, and assessment of wider general workforce management issues (which should also clearly be reflected in the structure of any evaluation report). It should therefore consist of:

The HR Service

1. A tiered approach to the assessment of the *HR service*, which recognises the context and complexity of local government workforce issues and weights their importance appropriately as follows:

i) **Key Identified Workforce Risks for Local Authorities and HR responses**

Greatest weight would be given to areas of identified HR risks. It is proposed that these be extracted from each authority's Corporate Risk Register. It is also proposed to collect and create a collated version to obtain a broad picture of the critical workforce issues facing local authorities in Wales

The HR function would be assessed against the relevant locally identified risks in terms of knowledge / understanding of and capability / capacity to tackle these, the action planned and undertaken and the outcomes achieved to date.

The rationale for this is that in a financial crisis situation (for example) it is more important that the HR function is effectively supporting the council in taking action to minimise the impact on services and

ensure its future viability. If the HR function achieves this then this success should be recognised in any assessment framework even if they have not made much progress on developing, for example, workforce planning systems (quite possibly as a consequence).

ii) Support for Council Priorities

The next most important aspect to be assessed would be HR knowledge / understanding of and capability / capacity to support the achievement of relevant Council priorities, the action planned and undertaken and the outcomes achieved.

These local priorities would be identified via an analysis of the authority's Corporate Plan. In practice some of these priorities will relate to identified risk and some to basic HR processes like workforce planning or appraisal for example.

The key principle is that the areas to be assessed would be determined by the organisation's own priorities, and the focus would therefore be evidence-based rather than pre-determined. Our view is that it is HR's key role to support the organisation effectively, rather than seeking to implement a programme of 'best practice' regardless of organisational need.

iii) Implementation of Basic HR & 'Best Practice' Processes

Of course the HRD Network recognises the value of getting 'the basics' right. However, of itself, this is considered to be of less importance than HR work to mitigate risks or respond to identified organisational priorities, and any assessment should be weighted accordingly.

General Workforce Management

2. An assessment of the extent to which the different stakeholders* in the council understand, support and contribute to:

- i) The HR Work programme / workforce strategy
- ii) Effective People Management

* Stakeholders would include:

- Elected Members
- Corporate Management Team
- Senior Managers
- Line Managers
- Trades Unions
- Employees