

ALARM Awards 2007

Executive Summary - Operational Risk Management at Suffolk Coastal District Council

At Suffolk Coastal we appreciate how important sound risk management is if we are to improve as a council and maximise our opportunities. In late 2004 a new Performance and Risk Management team came into post. The organisation had recently been through a change management programme and initiative fatigue had set in. As a team we would need all our powers of persuasion to get the message over that we are all risk managers; it's not something new to us, it's not an additional process, it's not rocket science! It *is* however essential that we all take responsibility.

A previous Change Management team had developed a strategy, and a programme of workshops on risk management had been rolled out, but lack of subsequent implementation of a formal process had resulted in impetus being lost. Risk was being managed in an ad-hoc fashion, but mostly informally. At operational level staff were not engaged and we needed to change this.

So we set about systematically reintroducing the initiative by engaging directly with those managing the risks. We did this by meeting individually with each team leader and their team and in this way we built good working relationships through which we could encourage engagement. Working jointly with teams we developed the individual registers and integrated them into their performance management scorecards. Throughout this process we were able to reassure staff that the Suffolk Coastal approach is to keep the processes simple, and focussed on realistic threats which individual staff can relate to. Trust gradually built over a period of time as everyone realised that we were genuine in our conviction that effective risk management can be achieved without the need for a mini-industry of paper trails. Risk *can* be managed simply *and* effectively.

Next, through a gradual and systematic approach, we introduced a set of easy to understand tools from which staff can pick and choose the relevant information without being overwhelmed. As each element was developed it was made accessible and signposted through the use of encouraging emails and announcements on the council's Intranet. We also developed an innovative e-learning module for all staff and Members, which has been very well received, with some users even saying they thought it was fun to do! We intend to continue with this user-friendly approach to deliver future training and information.

Any process to manage risk is as good as the commitment of our staff to the process and we are very encouraged by the continuous improvement both in the effectiveness of their operational risk registers and in the changing attitude amongst staff to risk management.

The following submission outlines how we are working in partnership with our staff and others to build on the success of this approach which can be summed up as ***keep it simple, keep it effective and keep it in mind.***