

# Assessment Report

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## Investors in People & Health & Wellbeing Assessment Report for South Ribble Borough Council

Undertaken by

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On behalf of Investors in People North of England

Project Number: 14/3125

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**Commercial in Confidence**

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## Introduction

This was a joint review of the Investors in People Standard and Good Practice Award: Health and Wellbeing for the Council which celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in April 2014. A planning meeting was held on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 with the Head of Human Resources and an HR Adviser at which a detailed update was provided and further information included the People Action Plan 2013 – 15 and comprehensive Staff Survey information which contained a detailed analysis of responses against the key target areas of engagement and how this is used to inform plans for further improvement.

## Overview of the Organisation

Since the last review the Council has continued in its efforts to continuously improve its effectiveness and has not undergone any significant change or decline. The following are key highlights:

- A recent Directorate re-structure has seen a reduction from five to three Directors – this will have workload implications for the Directors and their teams
- The Catering Function has been closed
- All external indicators suggest that the Council is performing well
- Employee survey data is similarly important in terms of employee perception of the Council and two surveys have been conducted since the last review – again the overall outcomes are encouraging with a sense of realism in an age of limited resources
- The Chief Executive has continued to seek feedback from staff directly, having been in post for four years, and again feedback has been good
- Much effort has been made to continue to develop leadership capability and, following formal training, the focus has been on networking visits to other organisations and providing coaching support
- Continuing collaboration with Lancashire County Council has helped with training resources
- Health and Wellbeing activity has continued and is valued by employees and is overseen by a group – again performance indicators linked to this are encouraging

The Corporate Plan provides a comprehensive overview and defines the performance requirements at corporate level – a People Plan links directly to this and defines how the workforce is managed and developed. The Council wish to use this as the focus for the review and detail was provided to enable this to form the Assessment Focus – performance against the People Plan is also the subject of regular scrutiny.

There were 290 people in scope of whom 44 (15%) were interviewed in accordance with national guidelines for an organisation of this size. A short discussion was also held with the Leader of the Council.

# Assessment Plan

- To provide feedback against the Investors in People Standard to ascertain that all the evidence requirements are still being met
- To provide feedback against the Investors in People Good Practice Award: Health and Wellbeing to ascertain that all the evidence requirements are being met
- To provide continuous improvement suggestions relating to the effectiveness of the organisation in line with the people issues defined in the Assessment Focus

## Outcome

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with guidelines provided for Assessors by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the Assessor was satisfied beyond any doubt that South Ribble Borough Council continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Standard. On behalf of Investors in People North of England the Assessor would like to congratulate the organisation on this achievement.

The Assessor was also satisfied beyond any doubt that South Ribble Borough Council continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Good Practice Award: Health and Wellbeing. On behalf of Investors in People North West the Assessor would like to congratulate the organisation on this further achievement.

### **Further Reviews**

The next full review will be due by no later than November 2017 but a further interaction will be due in approximately 18 months' time – there are numerous options here – these will be discussed at a Continuous Improvement Meeting which will be held within three months.

## Executive Summary

It is clear when talking to staff that the Council is a mature employer with many embedded practices which are reflective of successful and effective organisations. In terms of its continuing organisation development there are a number of strong factors which include:

- At a fundamental level open communications have engaged many with the need to “do things differently” in order to sustain the organisation and thus the high standards of services provided in the Borough – there is also significant pride apparent in people when referring to the standards of services provided
- The Values are thoroughly embedded and people habitually make reference to them in describing their role and working life at the Council – this reflects external best practice in many of the most successful and effective organisations
- The consistency and “human” perception of the senior management team is a source of re-assurance to many and Directors strive to remain connected to their teams
- Consistency of manager’s behaviours across the Council is again fundamental in creating an environment where people feel able to increasingly challenge the norm
- Investment in skills and knowledge has provided a highly capable workforce and many value opportunities provided to them to advance their careers or gain additional qualifications

- There is good practice embedded in the sharing of skills and new knowledge after attending learning events
- The flexible approach and policies to encourage a healthy work-life-balance are a source of value to many
- Team working is strong in all cases with good levels of mutual respect and willingness to help others and share knowledge and experience – newcomers have thus also quickly assimilated and become effective in delivery of services
- Combined with the above factors the approach to Health and Wellbeing is exemplary and provides a valuable resource for managers and people with widespread benefits at organisational, team and individual level
- Levels of trust are strong and this is enhanced by efforts to be as open as possible with information pertinent to the Council and its future
- Efforts to seek feedback from people are outstanding in the experience of the Assessor with feedback published and used to inform future approaches – the data has shown improving trends in many areas

### **Continuous Improvement Opportunities**

The suggestions here are intended to dovetail with the existing thought process and the desire to focus on aspects of organisation development. It is also important to consider what is appropriate for the size of organisation.

There may be merit in considering a more structured approach to involving people in developing strategies – this may include Service Plans or Project Group work either linked to the Core Managers Group or stand-alone Projects. Any work here will help to establish a greater level of ownership of continuous improvement at an early stage and as close as possible to service delivery.

The development of Coaching will be crucial in the development of a more “transformational” culture in which innovation is widespread and linked to improvements in key measures of effectiveness of the Council. This will again help to give Managers confidence so that they can encourage people to “unlock” their ideas and potential to make improvements individually or as a team.

Within or as a separate exercise it may help to dedicate some management training time to managing change/transformation to ensure consistency of approach of Line Managers as they are pivotal. This will again build collective management understanding of how to lead and manage through transition and how to deal with the various “challenges along the way” and encourage innovation.

It may help to give more consideration to succession issues – again whilst acting in line with the size of the organisation – there may be natural synergy with the Team Leaders and current plans to include them in the Core Managers Group or activities would help here as would some project or “acting up” objectives. This will aid longer term consistency, provide short term cover where needed and provide encouragement for those with aspirations.

Linked to the above is the need for a consistent operational approach to encouraging and harnessing innovation – there are some pockets of good practice but there may be a need to educate managers and people in various approaches:

- A coordinated approach to team approaches using tools such as Lean Approaches, Project Teams or Problems Solving Teams
- Taking opportunities to celebrate successes and in particular use “peer to peer” feedback
- Taking opportunities to share knowledge and good practice across the Council and that gained from external visits or networking

- City Deal may present a wealth of opportunities for people to gain new experiences and practices which they can bring back
- It may help to consider visits to some Investors in People Champion organisations

As part of the continuing approach to Health and Wellbeing it is important to continually review progress against the elements of the Strategy – again there is opportunity for ownership within the HWB Group.

There may be an opportunity to progress quickly to a higher level of Investors in People Award – potentially a Gold Award. This could be carried out as a cost effective “Top Up” and would enable the Council to demonstrate further excellence to Residents and others who may come into contact with the Council such as through City Deal. It is also an opportunity for the Council to demonstrate its commitment to excellence as an employer of choice to current and potential employees.

To help with consideration of the Gold Award the many areas where progress has been made, although not formally assessed, are highlighted on the Topic Map on page 13. These areas again highlight the potential for a Gold Award. The Council have expressed an interest in this and more details will be sent separately – there may be opportunity to design an approach based around the continuing transformation phase and thus add maximum value through feedback provided.

## Findings against the Assessment Focus

By Agreement the findings in the section against each of the Key Actions selected at planning with specific reference made in each case to the People Priorities in each case. The elements of Health and Wellbeing are contained naturally within this section.

### **How employees have been involved in drawing up service plans and how their input has helped to shape plans**

Responses here were varied and to some extent affected by changes of Directorate or Line Manager:

- In some cases people had been involved in initial discussions about Service Plans
- In others people had been shown draft Service Plans
- In some areas people had no knowledge of how their Service Plans are put together

It is also pertinent here to add further observations:

- There was some inevitable uncertainty about the future given the cuts and the wider economic situation
- Given this many were aware that similar challenges are faced in the public and private sectors and thus valued the continuity of employment and efforts made to keep all employed
- In many cases people had accepted and become actively engaged with “moving with the times” and it is encouraging that this sentiment was expressed so many times

It is a credit to the senior management team that they have strengthened engagement with the future through what has been a challenging period of loss of numbers of staff and transition to a “leaner” way of operating.

*“When there is change going on they try to accommodate you better than in the past – my manager has a different approach to others in the past – we work together”*

*“We all have more work now and we all recognise this and we are not unique in this”*

*“Working here is good - it is local and flexible and I know everyone so I am comfortable coming to work”*

*“There is always an air of uncertainty with cuts but they do try to keep us informed about what is happening here and outside”*

### **Continued implementation of the Values Framework and what it means to people in their performance appraisal and in their day to day working – also perception of the effectiveness of the performance appraisal in supporting performance**

A comprehensive Values Framework has been embedded and is an integral part of the annual appraisal with discussion around how people have demonstrated each value over the past year. It is encouraging that many referred to the Values regularly during the discussions with the Assessor.

- Many covered the Values naturally as they spoke with teamwork and excellence featuring heavily
- A Values diagram had been used as a collective manager’s exercise to define the behaviours in simple day to day terms and again it is encouraging that many echoed the definitions of what each Value “is” – again it is pertinent to refer to the “Can do” sentiment linked to “Positive Attitude” and Embracing Change linked to “Learning Organisation”

- The use of the Values Framework is an integral part of the appraisal discussion – again there was a complete range of views here from those who felt it to be a formality to those who found it a useful focus to those who feared that a lengthy discussion may detract from what followed in the rest of the appraisal discussion

Again it is highly encouraging that many found the whole appraisal process to be positive and developmental and an effective vehicle for receiving positive feedback, setting performance targets, agreeing learning needs and activities and looking at career opportunities – factors which continue to be a valued part of the employee offer for many.

The key moving forward is to consolidate the above elements in departments where people have a new manager or are within a new directorate or a new role.

*“The appraisal and the Values Framework helps people to know where they fit in corporately”*

*“I think that people live the Values here without even realising it”*

*“The Values are OK but they tend to be the same wherever you work”*

*“The Values help you to focus and know what is expected and how we perform – everyone wants to show these Values”*

*“(Values) help to keep your customer focus – you need to do your best for your customer – (internal and external)”*

*“There is always a positive angle put on it (appraisal discussion)”*

*“The appraisal is used to set doable targets – you feel the incentive to improve and meet your targets each year”*

### **People’s awareness and perception of the Council’s benefits and rewards and how people have accessed and benefitted themselves – other areas which may be desired?**

Again feedback here was highly encouraging:

- Many described how they had become increasingly appreciative of the package of benefits and rewards available to them
- Many referred to how the package at the Council compared favourably with that in other employers – Flexitime and Career Development opportunities featured strongly here
- The Health and Wellbeing part of the offer is a major factor here – this is referred to in more detail in a dedicated section below
- All were aware of what was available to them and referred to positive benefits

*“As time goes on you realise how lucky we are here”*

*“Even though times have been difficult they are always looking to support you in your career and help you to get more qualifications”*



## **How people see their work and contribution being recognised from the Councillors, the Chief Executive, Directors and their own managers – what is working well or not so well?**

Considerable efforts are made to recognise contribution and again feedback was encouraging here:

- Those who had presented reports to Councillors had felt appreciated for their efforts
- The effort made by the Chief Executive to go around the building and speak to people is highly valued by many and has established a good level of “connectedness”
- Many managers make efforts to recognise contribution at the time or at appraisal
- Many staff referred to good practices in passing on letters of thanks or E Mails from residents
- Those in “front line” situations in the Borough described generally good relationships with residents
- Those in “front office” and often challenging roles again described a sense of value in helping residents

*“(Chief Executive) knows you individually”*

*“Just for that minute you feel important because the Chief Executive has taken that time”*

*“A number of comments come back from (Director) which is quite refreshing”*

*“(Manager) always takes the trouble to thank me”*

In summary the sense of value was strong with some inevitable desire for increased levels of pay but the overall approach to recognition helps with the sense of wellbeing of many.

## **How Technical or Occupational skills are developed and how core skills are developed such as Customer Care, Equality and Diversity, IT, Health and Safety and Skills for Life – the impact of skills development on individual or team performance**

As with many other areas staff valued the investment in learning and development which has been sustained – there were many positive observations:

- Overall levels of skills and knowledge are high which has provided strong capability
- The training provided in the Contact Centre is of a high standard and ensures people are kept up to date – the four level system of training also provides the maximum flexibility available with the resources present – all of this has impacted well on resident satisfaction figures
- Many have received support to develop their careers and have progressed or are ready to act in a succession role as people move on or retire – this is relevant with the demographic of the workforce with a high number of long servers
- The embedded practices of sharing skills and knowledge after training and the willingness to share within teams ensures that new knowledge is retained
- All reported good support with IT skills and where people still lacked some confidence there had been good support from their colleagues – again people praised the quality of training provided by the internal trainer

*“I have had to take more work on but I am not worried about not getting training immediately because I know somebody will sit with me”*

*“They have been really good with me – the training is second to none here”*

*“If something is relevant (qualification) it has never been turned back in my experience”*

*"I consider myself fortunate that I have been able to progress"*

*"The IT training is helpful to me – the patience is there and if it takes time it is given"*

**How leadership competencies are continuously developed so that culture and values are communicated through leadership and how change is managed in a supportive way – the confidence of those in leadership and management roles and how they are supported**

Efforts have been made to continuously improve the skills, knowledge and confidence of all managers. Recent developments have seen the Core Managers Group established, a series of visits to major employers in the area and the pilot for a Coaching Course being organised. Thus a momentum has been established with existing and new managers being supported well and also continuously gaining confidence.

The Core Managers Group has grown as a medium for mutual support and also to help the senior team in terms of managing the organisation as a whole and Managers valued this enhanced level of ownership and involvement.

All managers had an understanding of their role in supporting the Health and Wellbeing of their staff and the resources available to them – several described receiving valued help from their HR Adviser and good support through Occupational Health.

At a day to day level people reported a remarkable consistency of behaviours by their Line Manager which has contributed to overall levels of staff engagement – many reported an improved perception of this which has helped with the flow of communications. Inevitably there were some issues in areas where the Manager or Director was new – in all cases these appeared to be down to “early days” rather than any concerns about management styles – in some cases people understood that Directors had new commitments and were in a knowledge gathering phase.

It is also encouraging that the approaches of managers strongly reflected the Values.

*"(Director) is a really good boss – has an open style and is very communicative"*

*"(Director) sees potential and almost pushes you to better yourself"*

*"All of the Team Leaders and Managers are approachable and I do not feel there is a hierarchy"*

*"I have moved departments and have always had good support – the Managers understand that people should be able to further their careers"*

*"All in the Group (Core Managers) feel more involved in decision making and able to form the way we go forward"*

*"(Manager) stands back and leaves us alone and trusts us that the work is done"*

In summary the approach to Leadership and Management has been highly effective in all the circumstances and the main issues moving forward will be for new managers to consolidate their understanding of their teams and settle the delivery of Team Briefs and other communications. The issue of succession will be an area for consideration.

## **How employees feel they are empowered to make important decisions and benefit from clear leadership**

The overall levels of trust are strong and people valued this. In many areas ownership has improved as the work has been spread across fewer people and there are some pockets of good practice in this:

- Involvement of staff at the Depot in the purchase of new equipment served to motivate and is directly linked to improvements in efficiency of service and savings in maintenance costs
- Many in roles in the community valued the levels of ownership given to them in providing solutions and thus avoiding escalations
- Project Groups have made improvements in systems and efficiency in the Contact Centre which have again improved the speed and smoothness of service provided
- The Core Managers Group have included others in reviewing key documents or policies such as the Values and have taken the opportunity to involve members of their own teams in this work

*"You are simply trusted to do what you are doing"*

*"(Manager) likes us to take ownership and responsibility"*

*"Information trickles down but it has not been as good lately due to the transition"*

*"You are doing it daily so if it is not working for you people need to know about it"*

This is an area of huge potential for the development of greater ownership of review and implementation of improvements to practices which could have significant impact on the standards of service provided and thus longer term sustainability. Good progress has been made towards creating an environment in which innovation can flourish and thus provide great benefits in terms of excellence in delivery of services and efficiencies in costs and other overheads.

Managers strong in promoting team working and this again is reflective of a Value and sets the environment for greater ownership.

*"We all get on, everyone is open and all are willing to help"*

*"Everybody makes it a team environment and we are encouraged to do that by our team leader"*

*"There is no friction in the teams"*

## **How employees perceive the Health and Wellbeing initiatives, benefits and supporting approaches and how this has impacted on performance, productivity and wellbeing in individuals and teams**

Investment in this area continues to be significant with data gathered about needs through the Staff Survey with a dedicated section showing encouraging trends in some areas and highlighting needs in others which have been used to formulate approaches and initiatives. An innovative Lifestyle Survey is also used to provide key data. A comprehensive Health and Wellbeing Policy sets out the aims and responsibilities of the Council and a pro-active Wellbeing Group has evolved with representation in most areas. Work in this area has been both innovative and effective:

- It has enabled the Council to make improvements in key areas such as Absenteeism, Health and Safety and Productivity by providing data about cause and potential solutions
- Investment in Health and Wellbeing has seen the Council recognised by external awards and provide information and guidance to other organisations
- There was clear evidence of improved “psychological wellbeing” in people who had taken part in various therapy activities – the type and frequency is owned by participants
- Others reported improved awareness of postural issues due to Pilates and similar activities
- Encouragingly many referred to the importance of the Annual Health and Wellbeing Day in helping them to monitor potential health and lifestyle issues – this is significant also in lifestyle choices and in some cases people had taken this into their family life
- Excellent use had been made of phased return to work services to support staff to return smoothly to effective functioning
- Excellent use had been made of support for people at times of personal or family need and this is a highly valued as part of the employee offer
- Managers commented favourably on the outcomes of Health and Wellbeing activities and support with Pilates for example proving to be a strong team building exercise

*“The Health and Wellbeing Day generates a huge amount of debate”*

*“The Health and Wellbeing approach shows that your employer is bothered about your Wellbeing – it is them paying back for all you have given”*

*“The Health and Wellbeing day gives you a heads up on quite a few things – it is good that they take an interest – the Therapist has helped me to relax – it is like a treat really”*

*“The Pilates classes are good for team building and have had a good effect on people”*

*“The Council has a very good work-life balance to it”*

*“It is an excellent service – really good in terms of checking your general health”*

It is clear that this is an area of excellent, innovative and thoroughly embedded practice and one which has had a significant impact on the employee offer and on teams and individuals and is seen as valuable by Managers.

**Investors in People Framework Topic Map** – Green = Met, Blue = Progress Made

PLAN				DO				REVIEW	
01: BUSINESS STRATEGY	02: LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	03: PEOPLE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	04: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	05: MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS	06: RECOGNITION & REWARD	07: INVOLVEMENT & EMPOWERMENT	08: LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT	09: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	10: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
<b>THE STANDARD TOP MANAGERS SHOULD MAKE SURE (AND THEIR PEOPLE SHOULD CONFIRM) THAT:</b>									
<p>The organisation has a vision / purpose, strategy and plan (1,2)</p> <p>People are involved in planning (4,5,6)</p> <p>Representative groups (where appropriate) are consulted when developing the plan (3)</p>	<p>Learning priorities are clear and linked to the plan (2)</p> <p>Resources for learning and development are made available (1,3)</p> <p>The impact will be evaluated (4)</p>	<p>People are encouraged to contribute ideas (1,5)</p> <p>There is equality of opportunity for development and support (2,3,4)</p>	<p>Managers are clear about the capabilities they need to lead, manage and develop people (1,2)</p> <p>People know what effective managers should be doing (3)</p>	<p>Managers are effective and can describe how they lead, manage and develop people (1,2,3,4)</p>	<p>People believe they make a difference (2)</p> <p>People believe their contribution is valued (1,3)</p>	<p>Ownership and responsibility is encouraged (1,3)</p> <p>People are involved in decision – making (2)</p>	<p>People’s learning and development needs are met (1,2,3)</p>	<p>Investment in learning can be quantified (1,2)</p> <p>Impact can be demonstrated (3,4,5)</p>	<p>Evaluation results in improvements to people strategies and management (1,2,3)</p>
<b>YOUR CHOICE TOP MANAGERS SHOULD MAKE SURE (AND THEIR PEOPLE SHOULD CONFIRM) THAT:</b>									
<p>Clear core values relate to vision and strategy (7,11,13,17,19,23, 24)</p> <p>Key performance indicators are used to improve performance (9,15,21)</p> <p>Social responsibility is taken into account in the strategy (10,12,16,18,22, 25)</p> <p>People and stakeholders are involved in strategy development (8, 14,20)</p>	<p>The learning and development strategy builds capability (5,8, 12)</p> <p>Plan take account of learning styles (10,15)</p> <p>People help make decisions about their own learning (9,13,14,16)</p> <p>Learning and development is innovative and flexible (6)</p> <p>There is a culture of continuous learning (7,11, 17)</p>	<p>The recruitment process is fair, efficient and effective (6,11,14,19,22, 27)</p> <p>A diverse, talented workforce is created (7,12,15,20,23, 28)</p> <p>A work-life balance strategy meets the needs of its people (8,13,16,21,24, 29)</p> <p>Constructive feedback is valued (9,17,25)</p> <p>The structure makes the most of people's talents (10,18,26)</p>	<p>Leadership and management capabilities for now and the future are defined (4,9)</p> <p>Managers are helped to acquire these capabilities (5,6, 10,11)</p> <p>Leadership and management strategy link to business strategy, taking account of external good practice (7)</p> <p>Everyone is encouraged to develop leadership capabilities (8, 12,13)</p>	<p>Managers are role models of leadership, teamwork and knowledge sharing (5,6,7,9,10,13,1 4,15,16,17,20,2 2, 23)</p> <p>Coaching is part of the culture (8, 12,19,25)</p> <p>People are helped to develop their careers (11,18)</p> <p>There is a culture of openness and trust (21,24)</p>	<p>Reward and recognition strategies link to business strategy and are externally benchmarked (4,6,8,9,12,15, 18)</p> <p>Representative groups are consulted (where appropriate) (5, 14)</p> <p>What motivates people is understood (10, 16)</p> <p>Success is celebrated (11, 17)</p> <p>Benefits strategy goes beyond legal requirements (7)</p> <p>Colleagues' achievements are recognized (13,19)</p>	<p>Effective consultation and involvement is part of the culture (4,6,7,12,13,17)</p> <p>People are supported and trusted to make decisions (9,15)</p> <p>Knowledge and information are shared (5,10,14)</p> <p>People are committed to success (16)</p> <p>There is a culture of continuous improvement (8, 11)</p> <p>People can challenge the way things work (18)</p> <p>There is a sense of ownership and pride in working for the organisation (19)</p>	<p>Learning and development resources are used effectively (4,8,13)</p> <p>Learning is an everyday activity (11,18)</p> <p>Innovative and flexible approaches to learning and development are used (5,14)</p> <p>People are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential (9)</p> <p>All learning is valued and celebrated and is an everyday activity (6,10,17)</p> <p>Mentoring is used (7, 20)</p> <p>Personal development is supported (12,15,16,19)</p>	<p>The contribution of people strategies is measured and evaluated (6,10)</p> <p>Impact on key performance indicators can be described (7)</p> <p>Performance improves as a result (11,13,14)</p> <p>Career prospects improve (12)</p> <p>Flexible and effective approaches to measuring return on investment are used (8)</p> <p>Return on investment in people is reported to stakeholders (9)</p>	<p>Self review and information from external reviews are used (4,5, 10)</p> <p>Effective feedback methods are used to understand people's views on how they are managed (6,7, 11,12)</p> <p>Internal and external benchmarking are used (8)</p> <p>People's views on how they are managed improves (9,13, 14)</p> <p>People believe it's a great place to work (15)</p>

## Draft Continuous Improvement Plan

It is suggested that this is populated at the Continuous Improvement meeting so that account can be taken of any links to existing plans or a Gold Award Assessment.

Business Issue	Suggested Actions	Potential Benefits/ Impact of Taking No Action	Suggested Timescale Priority	Potential Solutions/Support Available
	•	•		
	•	•		
	•	•		
	•	•		
	•	•		
Consultancy Support	In order to support your continuous development arising from this report we have a number of flexible options including one to one support with your action plan, consultancy that would help in terms of further advice plus workshops, training or on line tools and tutorials. Please let me know if you want me to arrange any of these to support you on your journey when working towards world class practices.			

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