

## **The Essex Report – The People Dimension**

The unveiling of the Essex Report has in the short time since its publication been widely acclaimed as providing the key that unlocks the door to meeting the substantial challenges facing social housing in Wales over the next five to ten years. The reality is that the opportunities provided by the Essex Report remain just that, unless a number of smaller but nevertheless significant doors are not quickly unlocked to support some of the bold policy changes that will surely now flow from the Assembly.

The most critical of those interconnecting doors, but possibly the one that will not be factored into the sectors planning until the last minute, is the strategic people dimension to the changes that are about to unfold. Whilst it is not entirely clear from the reports findings, the scope of increased social housing provision required in the medium to long term is guaranteed to be significant and will need to be managed against the changing backdrop in the sectors operating landscape. The reality is that the magnitude of this agenda, and in turn the social improvements that the movement seeks to make within communities throughout Wales, will not happen without people. The scope, skills, outlook and focus of those working within social housing moving forward will need to change, requiring astute and inspirational leadership not just within individual organisations but perhaps, more importantly, strategically.

The recommendation within the Essex Report that pertains to the possibility in the future of Board Member Payments will be contentious. Whatever the outcome of that debate it will, if managed properly, lead to enhanced standards of governance, improved performance management, matching of skills profiles, social enterprise outcomes and development of a new profile of Board Member complimentary to the strategic leadership requirements to realise many of the reports recommendations.

An enhanced role for self assessment regulation will only work and be allowed to flourish if performance management systems are sufficiently connected to all parts of the organisation to ensure risk is managed proportionately and deliverables are achieved. The aim and the need, will be to develop truly performance orientated organisations that value performance within the context of a social enterprise. This almost certainly will require a re-think in the connection between personal, team, and organisation performance systems particularly for those organisations that embrace the opportunities presented by the Essex Report to diversify operations through a group structure model.

The purpose of this article is to raise the people management debate within the context of the Essex Report at the beginning of the process as opposed to someway down the line which is often the case. Leadership will be key. The stature of Executive Teams, their ability to work collaboratively and connect key stakeholders will never have been so important. New blood will almost certainly be required together with effective succession planning and personal development strategic in its nature which must be achieved almost certainly in part through an all sector framework to achieve the benefits of combined synergies.

The Challenge is on – your views will be welcomed!

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**Insight**