



## Longitudinal Analysis of the Beacon Scheme

### **The Beacon Scheme and the national surveys of English local authorities 2004 and 2006**



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Communities and Local Government (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) have jointly commissioned Warwick Business School to undertake a three year evaluation of the Beacon Scheme. The aim of the research is to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the Scheme for all local authorities, whether as authorities with a Beacon award or as attendees of learning events hosted by Beacon councils.

The Beacon Scheme has two key elements as a policy instrument intended to improve corporate and service performance in English local government. It provides national recognition through a competitive application process and award and it aims to share good practice on improvement across local government. Awards are given to those authorities that demonstrate excellence and/or innovation in specified service themes. The Scheme was expanded in 2003 to cover not only local authorities, but also other Best Value authorities (e.g. national park, police, fire, waste disposal, metropolitan county passenger transport authorities and parish councils). The research focuses on local authorities, which still constitute the vast majority of applicants and learners in the Scheme (Hartley and Downe, 2007).

The research includes data collection through qualitative case study research, secondary data analysis, three English national surveys of local authorities based on questionnaires to elected members and officers, a survey of front-line staff and two systematic literature reviews. A key part of the quantitative research is the analysis of the biennial national surveys examining how local authorities engage (or do not engage) with the Beacon Scheme and changes in local authority policies and practices as a result of participation in the Scheme. The over-arching aim is to ascertain the impact of the Beacon Scheme on local authorities. The survey research enables exploration of changes over time in perceptions of the Scheme, changes in policy-making, policies and practice as well as issues such as good practice, innovation, organisational learning and change and performance outcomes. The survey also tracks the participation rates of local authorities in the Scheme.

## 1.2 Research design and methods

The Beacon programme of research is one of the few Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA) studies to have national and longitudinal data, plus multi-respondent data. The purpose of the national organisational surveys is to collect data about the impacts of the Beacon Scheme and in the longitudinal elements to explore the changes in organisational learning, capacity, improvement processes, inter-organisational learning and impacts on service processes, delivery and performance. Its key relevance is that it provides an important extensive and quantitative base of data that can map progress and change, and examine lagged effects over time.

The objectives of the national surveys were to gather quantitative data from the experiences of local authority elected representatives (members) and managers on:

- Levels of engagement amongst local authorities with the Beacon Scheme and Beacons events;
- The attitudes of local authority elected members and officers towards the Beacon Scheme and how it could be improved;
- Organisational and inter-organisational learning through the Scheme;
- The impact of the Beacon Scheme and Beacon events on authority corporate and service performance;
- Methods employed by local authorities to improve services and stimulate innovation.

In order to focus the evaluation, four Round 5 Beacon themes were selected for in-depth study in the surveys as well as in the case studies: Benefits Administration; Early Years and Childcare; Better Local Public Transport; and Crime and Disorder Partnerships. These themes were selected on the basis of a range of criteria, with the aim of gathering a broad and varied selection. The themes cover a range of different local authority services; vary in the degree to which they cut across different services (cross-cutting) and involve partnership working; and encompass service areas with both established and emergent policy objectives and various policy time scales.

Councils that gained a Beacon Award in or prior to, Round 5 in the 2004 survey were categorised as Beacon councils. Similarly councils that had gained an award in or prior to, Round 7 in the 2006 survey were categorised as Beacons. The possession of Beacon status means that these authorities are required to carry out a number of dissemination activities over the period of the year following the award, in order to share their good practice with other organisations. Dissemination is described on the IDeA website as including “learning exchanges, open days, peer support and other learning activities”. Non-Beacon councils are categorised for our survey purposes as those that had not received an award, whether they had applied or not. The survey includes both Beacons and non-Beacons and has some common sections for all local authorities and some sections only for Beacons.

Survey respondents are of three main types which enable both political and managerial perspectives to be examined, and corporate and service perspectives.

- Strategic political – a senior elected member with a portfolio responsibility for one of the selected themes or more generally for performance improvement;
- Strategic managerial – the chief executive or head of corporate policy;
- Service/operational managerial – a service manager in one of four selected themes.

The Beacon Scheme evaluation is a longitudinal research project, taking Round 5 of the Scheme as the baseline year. During the period of the research (2003-2006), the second and third national surveys have been conducted in two time periods, approximately two years apart i.e. 2004 and 2006. Conducting the survey research over two periods provided the opportunity to explore changes over time in attitudes and approaches to the Scheme.

The first national survey, which is not included in this analysis, was conducted during an earlier phase of research into the Beacon Scheme, and was carried out in December 2000–January 2001. It is not as important for the current analysis, both because it is more dated and because it covers the Scheme prior to some significant modifications in 2003 (Hartley and Downe, 2007 in press).

The repeat surveys returned to the population base of 387 English local authorities, so they did not simply sample from those who responded in the previous survey. The second national survey was conducted between March and May 2004 and the third national survey was conducted between March and May 2006. However, the analyses were able to match the authorities longitudinally (though not the respondents).

This document reports the results of the longitudinal analyses, focusing on comparison of a selection of the key results of the second and the third national surveys of the Beacon Scheme. The comparative data from each national survey have been examined and reported. The main methods utilised have been statistical analyses to describe, compare and analyse differences in data collected in 2004 and 2006. The techniques used and the details of the methods are not fully described in this report but amongst analytical techniques, researchers used chi-square for categorical data that is presented in percentages or proportions; and for scales we compared the means of the two independent samples (2004 and 2006) using t-tests. This approach to analysis is intended to determine whether changes have taken place and whether those changes are statistically significant. The different analytical techniques used may result in different statistical outcomes from those presented in the respective individual reports of the 2004 and 2006 surveys (Rashman and Hartley, 2006; Rashman and Hartley, 2007).

The report contains mainly tabular and graphic displays of the main results accompanied by a description and commentary. Throughout the analysis we have applied tests of statistical significance either at the  $p < .05$  probability level (95% confidence) or at the  $p < .01$  probability level (99% confidence level). We have mainly used the .01 measure of significance, which is a relatively stringent measure of significance. In tables, significant statistical differences are highlighted in bold and we use the convention of:

- \*  $p < .05$  to denote 95% confidence
- \*\*  $p < .01$  to denote 99% confidence
- \*\*\*  $p < .001$  to denote 99.99% confidence level

A brief explanation of statistical terms used in this report may be found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 provides explanations for the figures and tables. Details of the survey methodology are available in Rashman and Hartley with IFF (2007) and Rashman and Hartley (2006).

### 1.3 Profile of response to two national surveys

In the 2004 national survey, 191 of the 387 authorities in England returned at least one questionnaire and this represents a response rate by authority of 49%. 63% of responding authorities submitted two or more responses and a total of 448 responses was received. 136 responses were from chief executives or policy staff; 59 were from elected members; and the remaining 253 were completed by heads of service across the four theme areas targeted in the evaluation.

In the 2006 national survey, 174 of the 387 English local authorities participated in the survey and returned at least one questionnaire and this represents a response rate by authority of 45%. Response rates to the two surveys were quite similar, particularly in terms of the distribution across types of role and types of council but with some decrease overall by the second survey. A total of 360 responses to the 2006 survey were received. 101 responses were from chief executives/heads of policy and 50 from elected members. The remaining 209 questionnaires were completed by heads of service with responsibility for one of the theme areas targeted by Round 5 of the Beacon Scheme (see Table 1 below). The analysis of response rate in both surveys by type of council (Metropolitan; Unitary; London Borough; District; County) show a healthy response rate from all types and therefore we can be confident that the survey is reasonably representative of councils across England.

**Table 1:** Response to two national surveys 2004 and 2006 by role

	2004 No. of Questionnaires Returned	2004 % of All Questionnaires Returned (448)	2006 No. of Questionnaires Returned	2006% of All Questionnaires Returned (360)
<b>Strategic roles</b>			<b>151</b>	<b>42%</b>
Chief Executives/ Heads of Policy	136	30%	101	28%
Elected Members	59	13%	50	14%
<b>Operational roles – Heads of service with responsibility for:</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>58%</b>
Benefits Administration	76	17%	72	20%
Crime and Disorder Partnerships	78	17%	71	20%
Better Local Public Transport	55	12%	36	10%
Early Years and Sure Start	44	10%	30	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100%</b>

The report is structured in five further sections:

- Perceptions of the Beacon Scheme;
- Beacon dissemination events;
- Learning and change resulting from Beacon events;
- Organisational context and impact of improvement;
- Policy implications.

Full details of each of the two national surveys may be found in the respective full reports and summaries: Rashman, L and Hartley with IFF (2007); Rashman, L. and Hartley, J. (2006); and Rashman, L. Hartley, J. and IFF (2006).

# Chapter 2

## Perception of the Beacon Scheme

This section firstly compares perceptions and opinions of the Beacon Scheme as a policy instrument between the two time periods and secondly compares the perceptions of respondents in Beacon councils, in 2004 and 2006.

### 2.1 General views of the Beacon Scheme

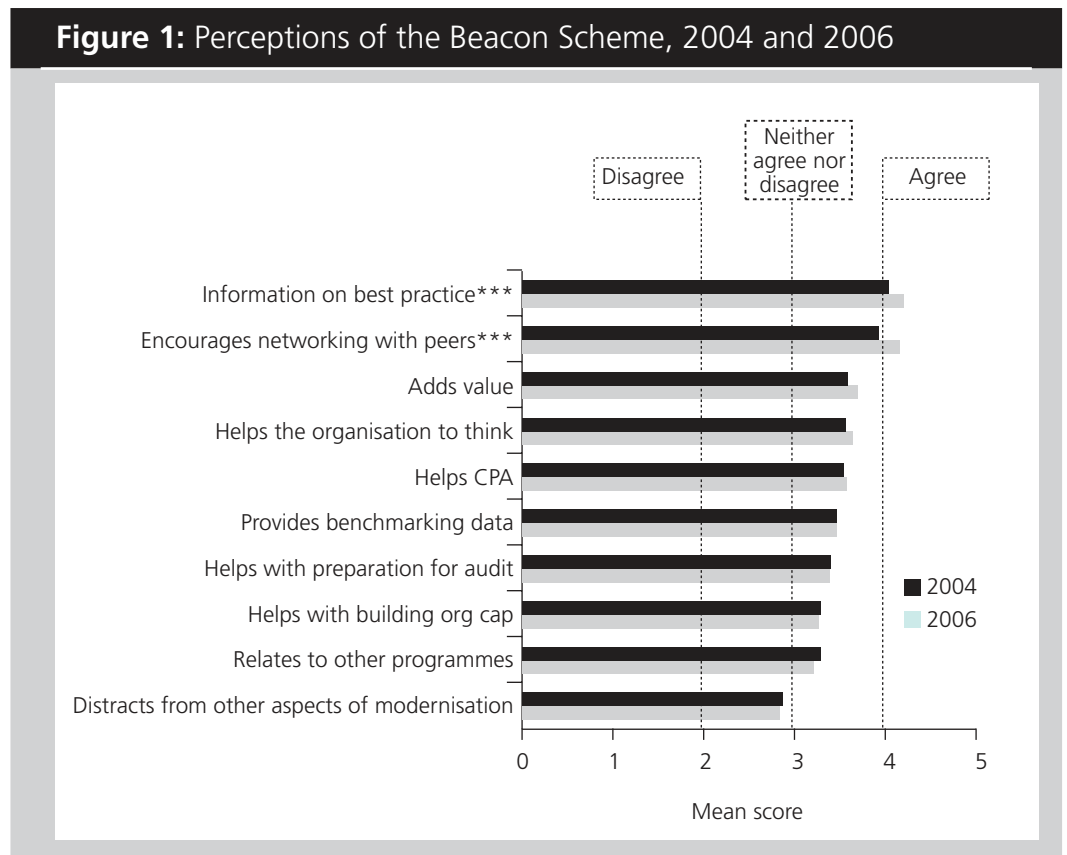
First, respondents were asked about their general views of the Beacon Scheme and the extent to which they agree with a series of statements regarding specific measures that the Beacon Scheme is designed to enhance. There were some small differences between the statements used in the questions in the 2004 and 2006 surveys, with the majority of statements remaining the same. The analysis compared the responses to those statements that were common to the questions asked in both surveys.

Figures 1 and Table 2 below compare the average responses from all types of respondents to ten statements in 2004 and 2006. Overall, respondents' perceptions show a slight increase in positive agreement about the impact of the Scheme in general and in most aspects of the Scheme over the two year period. The two aspects of the Scheme in which there is a significant increase in perceived benefit are:

- Provides information of best practice
- Encourages networking with peers

It appears from these results that local authorities understood and appreciated the Scheme mostly for its focus on sharing of information and knowledge about best practice and for encouragement of networking. The Scheme thus continued to deliver added value to local authorities and its perceived benefits were in those aspects which are distinctive compared with many other LGMA initiatives: improvement through learning with and from peers in other local authorities.

Perceptions of the value of the Scheme have been sustained but not increased over two years in other areas which are mainly related to corporate strategy, performance measurement and performance management. Those areas of the Scheme where perceived benefits remained constant in 2004 and 2006 include helping the organisation to think strategically; helping with Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA); and provision of benchmarking data.



There has been little change in perceptions of aspects of the Scheme that are less beneficial to respondents. Relative to other aspects of the scheme, in 2006 there continues to be less agreement that the Beacon Scheme relates to other programmes and helps to build organisational capacity. These responses suggest that linkages between the Beacon Scheme and other policy mechanisms for local government modernisation are no clearer than two years previously. Responses to the one negative statement which was tested in this section have remained the same; more respondents disagree than agree that the Scheme distracts from other aspects of modernisation. In effect, this means that most respondents do not find that the Scheme distracts from other modernisation programmes.

In addition to the bar chart, the responses to the statements are presented in a table below (Table 2), which displays the same information in a different format. Significant differences in response from 2004 to 2006, shown in bold, only occur in relation to the first two features. This shows, for example, that the level of agreement with the statement that the Beacon Scheme 'provides information on best practice' rises from 3.98 in 2004 to 4.13 in 2006.

**Table 2: Perceptions of the Beacon Scheme, 2004 and 2006**

	2004	2006	t	df	p
<b>Provides information on best practice ***</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>-3.06</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>0.002</b>
<b>Encourages networking with peers ***</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>-3.84</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Adds value	3.55	3.63	-1.47	762	0.142
Helps the organisation to think strategically about improvement	3.49	3.58	-1.45	771	0.147
Helps Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)	3.47	3.52	-0.82	770	0.412
Provides benchmarking data relevant to Best Value reviews	3.39	3.42	-0.51	761	0.612
Helps with preparation for audit and inspection	3.34	3.34	0.09	767	0.927
Helps with building organisational capacity	3.22	3.21	1.17	769	0.244
Relates to other programmes	3.22	3.15	0.16	761	0.871
Distracts from other aspects of modernisation	2.83	2.77	0.97	767	0.331

## 2.2 Costs and benefits of Beacon status

In each of the surveys, there were specific questions aimed at those councils which had acquired Beacon status in the preceding two years. These questions were focused on the experiences of Beacon councils, both in their role in dissemination of their good practice and in terms of the impact of Beacon status on the council.

Respondents from Beacons were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of seventeen statements indicating the possible perceived costs and benefits of Beacon status. Eleven statements focused on benefits and six on costs. The surveys asked respondents whether they perceived benefits from Beacon status which included impact internally within the council and external impact. Possible internal benefits included effects upon staff, the specific service and the whole council. External benefits included impact on national profile and partner relationships. Possible costs of Beacon status included effects upon financial and human resources. Table 3 presents the findings in terms of levels of agreement for each statement and for each year.

<b>Table 3: The costs and benefits of Beacon status, 2004 and 2006</b>					
	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>
Beacon status has raised the council's national profile	4.10	4.31	-1.58	145	0.102
Being a Beacon has boosted staff morale	4.02	4.21	-1.64	146	0.116
We gained knowledge and ideas from other authorities	3.77	3.94	-1.29	143	0.199
Beacon status has had a positive lasting effect	3.70	3.85	-1.09	142	0.276
Beacon status motivated further service improvement	3.69	3.90	-1.73	143	0.085
Being a Beacon has boosted elected members' profile	3.60	3.74	-0.93	146	0.354
Being a Beacon enabled a focus on specific aspects of the service	3.60	3.73	-0.91	143	0.367
Beacon status gave the authority influence with partners	3.60	3.53	0.46	140	0.644
Beacon services have benefited the whole council	3.59	3.68	-0.56	141	0.576
Being a Beacon has helped relationships with partners	3.55	3.77	-1.61	141	0.109
Beacon status has improved perceptions of the council locally	3.37	3.52	-0.97	144	0.336
Being a Beacon took resources away from service delivery	3.13	2.90	1.36	145	0.175
It is hard to sustain innovation during the Beacon year	3.06	2.82	1.61	115	0.109
The financial costs outweighed the benefits	2.76	2.57	1.06	141	0.291
The human resources costs outweighed the benefits	2.70	2.75	-0.32	142	0.748
Beacon services have overshadowed other council departments	2.58	2.39	1.64	144	0.102
<b>Beacon status made the authority less receptive to further change*</b>	<b>2.24</b>	<b>1.94</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>0.023</b>

\* p&lt;.05

In both the 2004 and 2006 surveys, the results were strikingly similar. In both surveys respondents identified that the three greatest benefits of Beacon status were:

- Beacon status has raised the council's national profile;
- Being a Beacon has boosted staff morale;
- We gained knowledge and ideas from other authorities.

In 2006, there was a slight (although not statistically significant) increase in agreement for ten of the eleven positive benefits, illustrating that the perception of benefits of Beacon status has been sustained. Amongst the sustained benefits, in addition to the three with the highest ratings, respondents agreed that Beacon status had a positive lasting effect and has motivated further service improvement. These sustained effects indicate the success of the Scheme over time for Beacon councils, both with regard to positive impact on staff and further service improvement and with regard to external perceptions of the council. The results indicate validation of the Scheme, as perceptions remained stable over two separate time measurements.

In contrast to the perceived benefits, the costs of Beacon status were perceived to be relatively small in both 2004 and 2006. Perceptions remained very similar in both years and the greatest perceived costs were:

- Being a Beacon took resources away from service delivery.
- It is hard to sustain innovation during the Beacon year.

Resources dedicated to Beacons continue to present a problem for some respondents from Beacon authorities, and it is likely that the resource deficit has an impact on sustaining innovation on those authorities. In 2006, respondents reported a slight decrease in the costs of Beacon status, which was statistically significant only with regard to one variable: Beacon status making the authority less receptive to further change. Over time, fewer respondents considered that Beacon status reduces receptiveness to further change. Overall, the benefits continued to outweigh the costs for Beacon councils.

### 2.3 Dissemination mechanisms used by Beacon councils

Respondents from Beacon councils were asked which mechanisms they had used in their authority to disseminate their good practice in the Beacon Scheme and the extent to which they perceived these mechanisms to be successful. The list of options offered thirteen different dissemination mechanisms. These options included face-to-face interaction, such as open days and peer-to-peer mentoring and, on the other hand, distance methods such as websites and information packs.

The results show that respondents from Beacon councils perceived the most successful mechanisms in 2004 and 2006 to be the same (see Table 4, which presents the findings in terms of reported degree of success for each mechanism and for each year). There were some small changes but no

significant differences between responses to this question in the two surveys. For example, there were small but non significant increases in the perceived success of secondment, peer-to-peer mentoring, seminars and workshops.

**Table 4:** Success of mechanisms used by Beacon councils to disseminate good practice, 2004 and 2006

	2004	2006	t	df	p
Open day	5.14	4.81	1.47	86	0.145
Site visit (or study tour)	4.88	4.60	0.93	105	0.356
Written material/article/(guides)	4.86	4.71	0.66	105	0.509
Network with other local authorities	4.85	4.54	1.24	102	0.219
Workshop	4.80	4.20	1.93	95	0.056
Information pack (or toolkit)	4.79	4.44	1.33	108	0.187
Seminar	4.63	4.06	1.79	105	0.077
(Council) Website	4.59	4.41	0.67	105	0.501
One to one tailored visit	4.34	4.37	-0.08	94	0.935
Network with central government	3.96	4.11	-0.44	97	0.658
Peer to peer mentoring	3.28	3.89	-1.48	92	0.143
Video / CD-Rom	3.07	3.45	-0.92	81	0.358
Secondment (or shadowing)	1.81	2.53	-1.76	78	0.083

The most successful mechanisms reported included open days, site visits, and networks with other local authorities. In both years, less successful mechanisms were reported to be secondments and video/CD Roms. These results suggest that respondents from Beacon councils continue to value most highly dissemination that is based on face-to-face mechanisms and those methods which enable participants to learn directly from the managers and staff of a Beacon service or theme area. Open days and site visits enabled Beacon authorities to showcase their services and facilities in situ. This type of dissemination event helped to share knowledge with visiting authorities about approaches, processes and systems by demonstrating the Beacon service in action.

Written material in articles, guides and toolkits was reported to continue to be the second most successful type of dissemination mechanism, suggesting that respondents from Beacon councils consider practical written information and guidance as offering successful mechanisms for sharing good practice, either as a support or supplement to face-to-face methods, or as an alternative where attendance at events is not possible.

# Chapter 3

## Beacon dissemination events

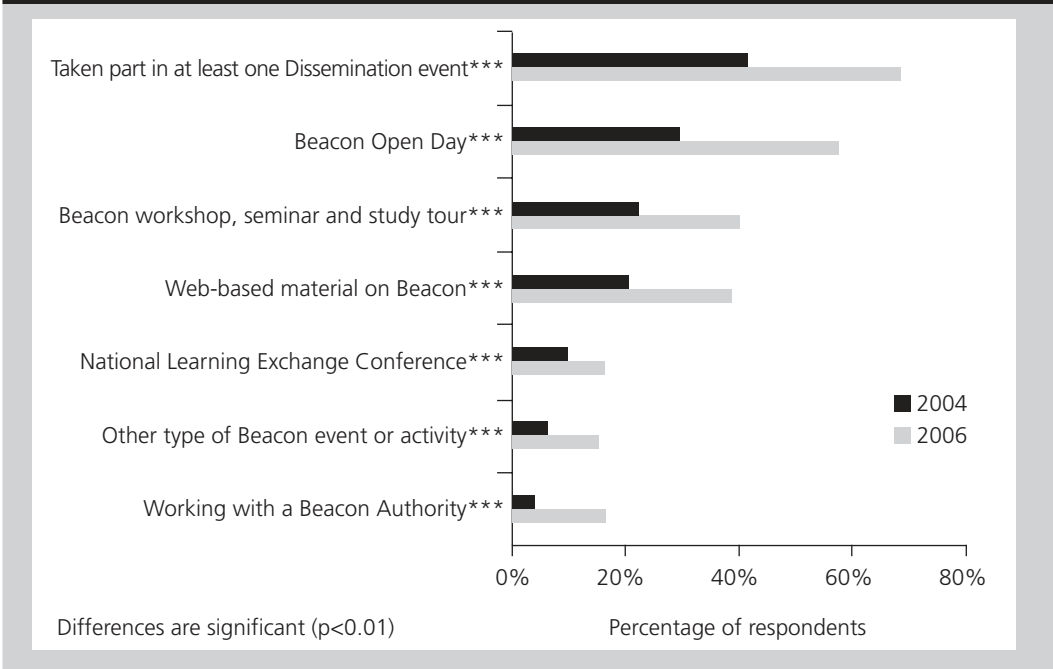
This section examines the extent to which respondents attended Beacon dissemination events, whether they prepared for such events and the types of events and activities in which respondents participated. Those respondents who attended events may be from either Beacon councils or from non-Beacon councils.

### 3.1 Attendance and participation in Beacon dissemination activities

Respondents were asked in the 2004 and 2006 surveys whether they had attended a Beacon dissemination event in the previous few years (Rounds 1 to 4 in 2004; Rounds 5 to 7 in 2006). In 2006, respondents were asked about a slightly wider range of dissemination events and activities than in 2004. Comparisons were made on the activities and learning events that were common to both surveys.

Responses show that participation in all of the learning activities increased significantly between 2004 and 2006 (see Figure 2 and Table 6). The positive trend to higher participation rates in Beacon dissemination events suggests that local authorities have become more likely to attend a range of Beacon events and increasingly wanted to learn from examples of best practice. There was a marked increase in participation at Beacon open days; workshops, seminars and study tours; and in the use of web-based material. Beacon open days continue to show the highest participation rates and show an increase from 30% to 58% participation by respondents over the period. This increase suggests that respondents perceived continued and increased value in visiting a local authority and in gaining first hand information in situ about how best practice has been achieved.

**Figure 2:** Percentage of respondents attending Beacon events and making use of learning activities, 2004 and 2006



**Table 5** Proportion of respondents attending Beacon events and making use of learning activities, 2004 and 2006

(N = 444, df =1)	2004	2006	c <sup>2</sup>	p
Working with a Beacon Authority ***	0.04	0.16	34.11	0.000
Other type of Beacon event or activity ***	0.06	0.15	16.78	0.000
National Learning Exchange Conference ***	0.10	0.16	7.14	0.008
Web-based material on Beacon ***	0.20	0.39	28.83	0.000
Beacon workshop, seminar and study tour ***	0.22	0.40	25.72	0.000
Beacon Open Day ***	0.30	0.58	56.62	0.000
Taken part in at least one Dissemination event ***	0.41	0.68	55.01	0.000

\*\*\* Differences are significant (p<.0.01)

Table 5 shows the proportion of respondents attending Beacon events and making use of learning activities. The 2006 survey showed substantial increases in participation in activities which in 2004 were comparatively less well used. These included working with a Beacon authority through tailored one-to-one support, shadowing or mentoring. Overall, the rate of participation in at least one Beacon dissemination event increased from 0.41 (41%) to 0.68 (68%) of respondents. These positive trends suggest firstly that the value of the Beacon Scheme for learning between authorities continues to grow and secondly that there is perceived value in the range of dissemination activities available. Web-based material has increased

significantly as a source of dissemination but face-to-face methods and in situ methods continue to have the highest participation rates.

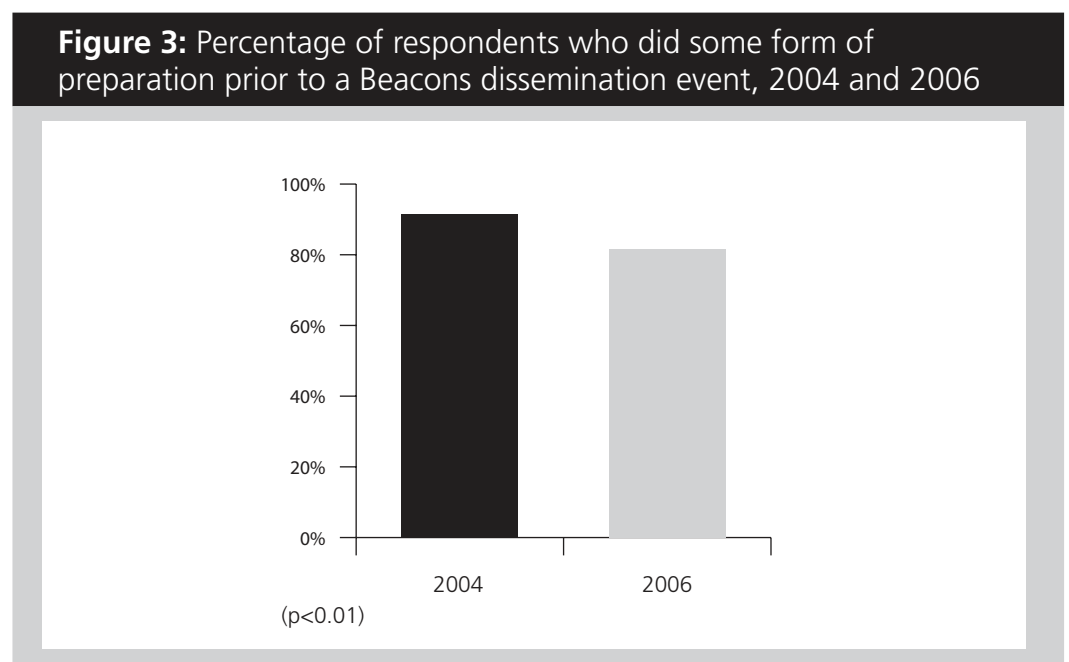
Taken together with the analysis of the mechanisms for dissemination that Beacon councils perceive to be successful, the increase in the extent of participation in Beacon activities suggests that there is a strong perception that the most successful methods for dissemination have been Beacon open days, site visits and study tours, workshops and, to a lesser extent, written material and web-based material. These results suggest an appropriate mix of dissemination methods has been used. The increase in participation rates is important for the overall success of the Scheme, which hinges on sharing good practice through such events and activities as the means to improvement.

### 3.2 Preparation for Beacon events

Respondents were asked the same question in the 2004 and 2006 surveys regarding any preparation that they undertook prior to attending a Beacon dissemination event. A range of preparatory activities was offered in the surveys and included accessing information about the Beacon Scheme or events through websites; identifying areas within a specific service for improvement; discussion with colleagues; and identifying aspects of good practice to learn from Beacon councils.

The majority of those attending a Beacon learning event or participating in a dissemination activity undertook some form of preparation beforehand. There was a slight reduction in the percentage of respondents who reported that they prepared for a Beacon dissemination event between 2004 and 2006 (See Figure 3). In both years, however, at least 80% of respondents who attended a Beacon event prepared in at least one way.

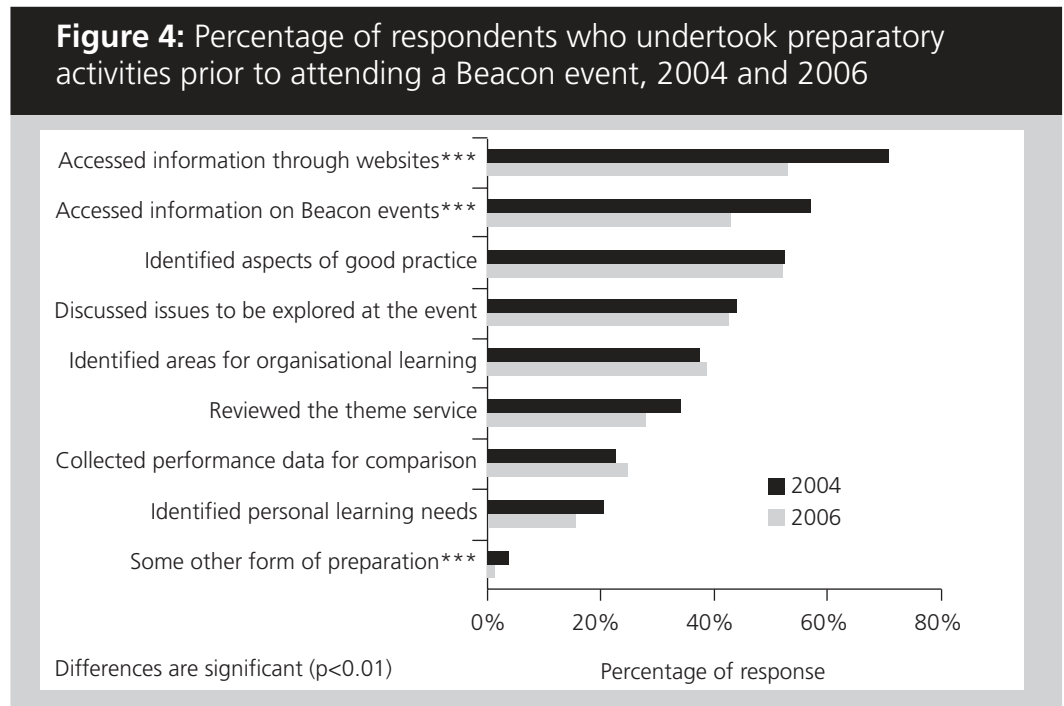
**Figure 3:** Percentage of respondents who did some form of preparation prior to a Beacons dissemination event, 2004 and 2006



There was a small reduction in the average number of activities used for preparation between 2004 and 2006 (see Figure 4 below). Eight different types of preparatory activities were offered in the questionnaire. In addition to the activities described above, preparatory activities included collection of performance data for comparison, identification of personal learning needs and areas for organisational learning.

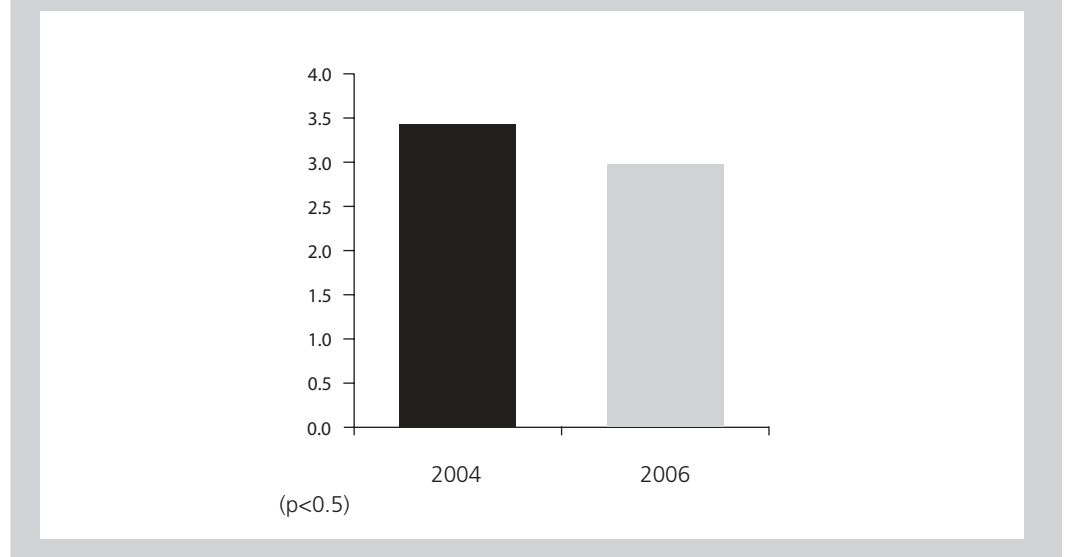
In both years 2004 and 2006 the number of respondents remained approximately the same who prepared by: identifying aspects of good practice to learn from Beacon councils; reviewing their own service to identify areas for improvement; identifying areas for organisational learning; and discussing with colleagues issues to be explored at the event. In contrast in 2006, fewer respondents than in 2004 prepared by accessing information about the Beacon scheme and specific Beacon events.

The results suggest firstly that participants continued to prepare for learning at Beacon events and secondly that their preparation focused increasingly on prior identification of aspects where learning was perceived to bring most benefit for improving their service and their organisation and focused less on general information.



The average number of preparatory activities undertaken by participants was at least three (see Figure 5) but there was a slight reduction between 2004 and 2006.

**Figure 5:** Average number of different activities used to prepare for a Beacon dissemination event, 2004 and 2006



# Chapter 4

## Learning and change resulting from Beacon events

In this section, we examine the experience of respondents who participated in Beacon dissemination events or learning activities, the extent to which they learned from Beacon events, and the extent to which they made changes as a result of ideas generated from the events.

### 4.1 Extent of learning from Beacon event

Respondents were asked about the amount that they had learned from the most recent Beacon event that they had attended; whether they had learned a great deal, a fair amount, a little or hardly anything at all. The question addressed learning in different areas, which included for example: how best practice had been achieved; processes of change used by Beacon councils; and the role of elected members in supporting change. The 2006 survey included a wider range of areas of learning than the 2004 survey and the analysis included only those seven aspects of learning which were common to both surveys. Figure 6 and Table 6 present the results in terms of levels of learning for each statement and for each year.

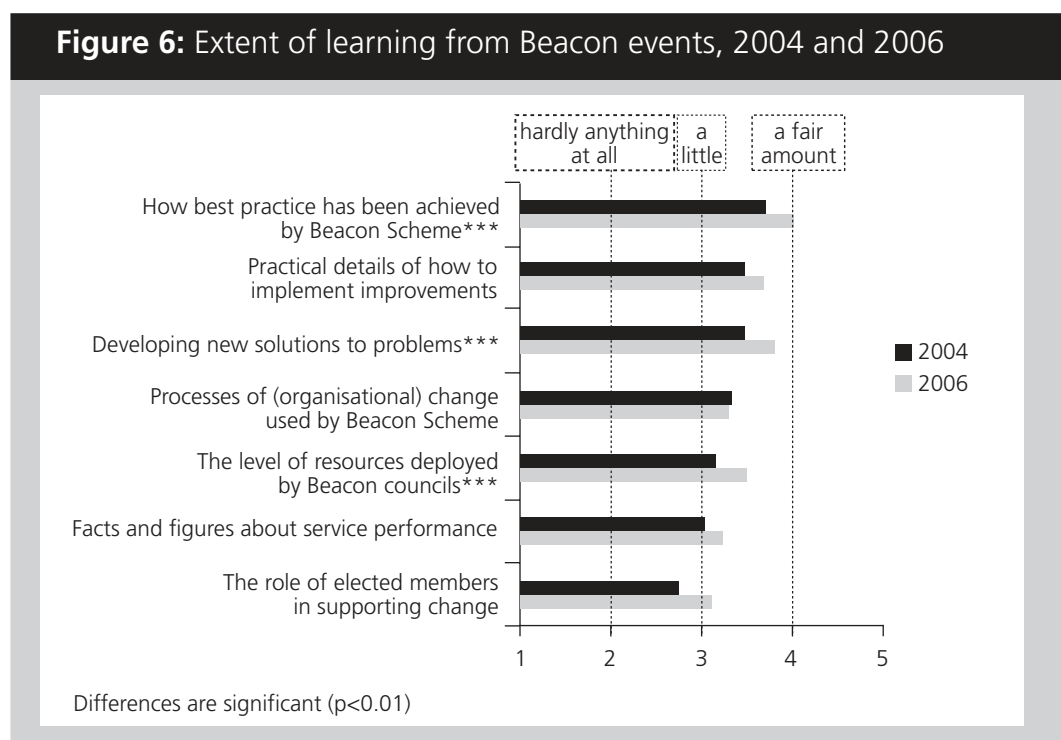


Table 6: Extent of learning from Beacon events, 2004 and 2006

	2004	2006	t	df	p
How best practice has been achieved by Beacon councils ***	<b>3.62</b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>-3.39</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Practical details of how to implement (specific) improvements in service delivery	3.40	3.59	-1.89	330	0.060
Developing new solutions to problems ***	<b>3.38</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>-3.83</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Processes of (organisational) change used by Beacon councils	3.26	3.22	0.35	332	0.729
The level of resources deployed by Beacon councils ***	<b>3.06</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>-3.62</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Facts and figures about service performance in other authorities	2.96	3.14	-1.67	326	0.096
The role of elected members in supporting change ***	<b>2.67</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>-3.67</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Differences are significant ( $p < 0.01$ )

In both surveys, respondents reported that they learned most about three areas:

- How best practice has been achieved by Beacon councils;
- Practical details of how to implement specific improvements in service delivery;
- Developing new solutions to problems.

In these three areas respondents reported in 2006 that they had learned a fair amount.

On the one hand, respondents continued to learn most about the same three areas described above. On the other hand, the amount that was learned increased in four out of the seven aspects of learning between the 2004 and 2006 surveys, showing a gradual increase in the amount of learning over the two time periods. The analysis showed statistically significant increases between 2004 and 2006 in the following four areas:

- How best practice has been achieved by Beacon councils;
- Developing new solutions to problems;
- The level of resources deployed by Beacon councils;
- The role of elected members in supporting change.

The results of the analysis suggest that the extent of learning from participation in Beacon learning events and activities has been maintained and has increased slightly over the two year period in most of the areas measured. Secondly, the analysis identifies a consistency in those aspects of learning in which respondents learned most from Beacon events. Respondents reported in both surveys that they tended to learn most about specific processes and practices of achieving improvements in services. These are likely to be relatively complex aspects of learning compared with, for example, 'facts and figures about service performance'. The area in which respondents continued to report that they learn most – 'How best practice has been achieved by Beacon Councils' – can be seen as the primary learning aim of the Scheme.

## 4.2 Changes implemented as a result of ideas generated from Beacon event

An important aspect of the Beacon dissemination events is the extent to which participants in the activities implemented changes as a result of knowledge that they acquired and whether they were able to apply that learning to their own organisational situation. Respondents were asked whether, following attending an event, they had made any changes in their service as a result of ideas that had been generated by the Beacon Scheme.

The analysis compared responses to ten different types of change which included changes in policy, relationships and working practices. Overall, there is not much difference between the extent to which changes were made in 2004 and 2006 (see Table 7 below). A similar proportion of respondents in both of the surveys made changes in each of the different types of change suggested.

**Table 7:** Percentage of respondents who attended an event implementing changes as a result of ideas generated by the Beacon Scheme, 2004 and 2006

<b>(N = 415, df =1)</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>c2</b>	<b>p</b>
Revised policy/strategy **	<b>39%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>5.08</b>	<b>0.029</b>
Introduce new working practice	38%	31%	2.15	0.147
Review of service	35%	29%	1.58	0.242
Change in approach to working with partners	34%	33%	.03	0.917
Change in organisational structure	20%	22%	.39	0.547
Change in approach to member-officer relationship	18%	16%	.44	0.515
Change in service procurement	17%	14%	.75	0.416
Change in approach to working with staff	15%	15%	.02	1
Change in approach to work with central government	13%	13%	.02	0.884
Review of support function	13%	14%	.06	0.885

The most common changes implemented in a service in both the 2004 and 2006 surveys were:

- Revised policy and strategy;
- Introduce new working practice;
- Change in approach to working with partners;
- Review of service.

Of the most frequently cited changes implemented, the one significant increase reported by respondents was revised policy and/or strategy. This type of change increased from 39% to 50% of respondents between 2004 and 2006.

Similarly, the least common changes reported to have been implemented in a specific service as a result of ideas from a Beacon event in both the 2004 and 2006 surveys were very similar. These were: approach to work with central government; review of support function; and change in service procurement.

Overall, the types of changes that were implemented appear firstly to focus specifically on revised policy and strategy and secondly derive most closely from aspects of good practice exemplars of the Beacon themes. Fewer changes were implemented in terms of other types of activities that were perhaps not perceived to be central to Beacon success.

### 4.3 Sources of learning used to inform improvements

Respondents in operational roles (i.e. heads of service) were asked to indicate the extent to which they had drawn upon various sources of learning to support specific improvements in their service and respondents in strategic roles were asked the extent to which they had drawn on these sources to support improvements in their local authority.

Analysis of comparison between the two surveys shows that in both 2004 and 2006 respondents continued to utilise some specific sources of learning more than they used other sources (see Table 8, which shows the extent to which difference sources were used for each year). The sources of learning can be broadly categorised as follows:

- Sources of learning internal to the local authority and available locally;
- Sources of learning based on local, regional and national collaboration;
- Sources of learning related to performance assessment and management;
- Sources of learning based on participation in nationally provided programmes.

In both surveys respondents drew most on sources of learning internal to the local authority and available locally: these included implementation of service improvement plan; participation in council-wide programmes of improvement; and local professional networks. Respondents in 2006 continued to draw least on sources of learning based on participation in nationally provided programmes. These nationally provided sources included: participation as a Beacon Council; learning from Beacon councils through the Beacon Scheme; and participation in the Communities and Local Government Capacity Building programme.

The order of preference of sources of learning remained the same. However, in all categories, respondents in 2006 reported that they would draw to a lesser extent on each of the sources of learning to support specific improvements in their service. Overall, the results suggest that the extent to which all sources of learning are used to support improvements is significantly lower in 2006 than in 2004 and point to a reduction of at least 10% in the extent of usage of each source.

On the one hand, both of the surveys show a consistent preference for specific categories of learning. Respondents preferred local sources of learning to support improvements in a specific service and specific local authority. Local, regional and national collaboration is the next most preferred source of learning. Participation in national programmes continued to be the least preferred source of learning for supporting improvements.

On the other hand, respondents in the 2006 survey reported that they would make less use of all sources of learning for making improvements than they did in 2004. This result is difficult to interpret. One possible interpretation is that local authorities were less able to allocate resources to learning as a way to achieve service or corporate improvement from any source (and this interpretation is supported by some analyses in the next section on organisational context). The impact of performance regimes, with a focus on measurement as opposed to learning as the preferred approach to improvement, may have led authorities to place greater emphasis on performance measurement and management than organisational learning. Research (Seijts and Latham 2005) has argued that both learning and performance goals are needed to increase effectiveness but that performance goals should not be set until an individual has the knowledge to attain it. We address these issues further in sections 5 and 6.

**Table 8:** Extent to which source of learning drawn upon to support improvements, 2004 and 2006

	2004	2006	t	df	p
Implementation of Service Improvement Plan	3.93	3.51	5.26	514	0.000
Participation in council-wide programme of improvement	3.59	3.12	5.63	576	0.000
Internal performance improvement resources	3.59	3.16	5.12	493	0.000
Internal review	3.59	3.27	3.86	498	0.000
Internal training and development	3.55	3.14	5.44	608	0.000
Local professional network	3.51	3.21	3.74	602	0.000
Collaborative learning with partners	3.50	3.12	4.68	599	0.000
Electronic sources of good practice (e.g. DPM, IDeA website)	3.40	2.84	7.18	610	0.000
External audit and inspection	3.39	2.85	6.79	631	0.000
Local service based benchmarking	3.30	2.75	6.49	572	0.000
Collaboration with central government departments	3.25	2.58	8.46	607	0.000
Peer to peer support between councils	3.23	2.77	5.31	583	0.000
Collaboration with national agencies	3.13	2.65	6.38	609	0.000
Regional networks	3.12	2.75	4.27	604	0.000
Participation in local learning programme	2.81	2.11	6.98	479	0.000
Performance support	2.79	2.25	6.03	516	0.000
Participation in learning from Beacon councils	2.62	2.08	7.35	620	0.000
Participation in national learning programme	2.40	1.71	7.80	479	0.000
Participation in ODPM/CLG Capacity building initiative	2.40	1.80	5.79	484	0.000
Participation in learning as a Beacon council	2.25	1.72	4.98	468	0.000

All differences are significant ( $p < 0.001$ )

# Chapter 5

## Organisational context and impact of improvement

This section explores factors which impact on processes within the local authority that support or impede learning, innovation and change. It goes on to explore how measures of local authority performance affect perceptions of the local authority.

### 5.1 Restrictions and constraints to organisational learning and change

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they perceived a range of factors to be restrictive or constraining in terms of organisational learning and change in their authority. The scale that they were asked to use ranged from a very little extent to a very great extent. The list of factors included a smaller number of options in the 2006 survey and this analysis includes the thirteen factors that were common to both surveys. Factors suggested included possible constraints from external sources – such as legislation, audit and inspection – and from internal sources – such as staff morale and lack of capacity in the council.

**Table 9:** Extent to which factors perceived as restrictive of organisational learning and change 2004 and 2006

	2004	2006	t	df	p
Workload pressures ***	3.40	3.71	-3.73	715	0.000
Constrained finances ***	3.19	3.55	-3.85	722	0.000
Legislation ***	2.75	3.02	-3.07	718	0.002
Working with Central Government departments ***	2.64	2.90	-2.74	709	0.006
Lack of capacity of council ***	2.61	3.35	-7.20	721	0.000
Insufficient cross-departmental working	2.27	2.28	-0.17	710	0.868
A lack of sufficient organisational development skills to achieve cultural changes	2.22	2.17	0.59	709	0.555
Insufficient skills in change management	2.05	2.16	-1.16	716	0.248
Audit and inspection ***	1.98	2.64	-7.11	718	0.000
Staff morale	1.93	1.99	-0.65	719	0.513
Lack of project management methodology	1.87	1.80	0.69	714	0.493
Difficulty in sharing improvement and learning ***	1.79	2.15	-4.01	715	0.000
Political-managerial relationships ***	1.54	1.95	-4.20	719	0.000

Table 9 shows the results in terms of the extent to which factors were perceived as restrictive for each year. In eight out of thirteen factors there was a significant increase in the perceived level of constraint to organisational learning and change in the authority between 2004 and 2006:

- Workload pressures;
- Constrained finances;
- Legislation;
- Working with central government departments;
- Lack of capacity of council;
- Audit and inspection;
- Difficulty in sharing improvement and learning;
- Political-managerial relationships.

In both surveys, the major constraints were perceived to be workload pressures, constrained finances and lack of capacity of the council. In addition to continuing to be the main pressures, respondents perceived that these three sources of pressure had increased. In broad terms, the greatest extent of constraint and the increases in perceived constraints on learning and change were in two areas: first, those restrictions which derive from external sources, such as legislation and constrained finances; and secondly constraints that derive from internal sources that are relatively complex and difficult to address, such as political-managerial relationships and organisational capacity.

Five factors were reported to have the same extent of constraint in both years. These factors all derive from internal sources of constraint and three of them relate to lack of skills, such as project management and change management. Other factors that are reported to be consistently constraining are staff morale and insufficient inter-departmental working.

These results regarding constraints on councils may be related to the earlier results about sources of learning (see previous chapter). Respondents perceived greater constraints on organisational learning and change in 2006. Many of the perceived constraints were external to the organisation in origin and may have negatively influenced allocation of resources for organisational learning and change, placing increased emphasis on performance regimes, efficiency and measurement. The sustained, and in some cases increased extent of internal constraints to learning and change, and in particular perception of the lack of capacity, may have had an additive effect, making learning and change more difficult for an individual local authority to accomplish.

## 5.2 Impact of measures on authorities' self perception

The survey asked respondents a series of questions about perceptions of their local authority's performance and its approach to improvement. Amongst these questions, respondents were asked about the extent to which a range of measures of local authority performance contributed to their view of their own local authority. This question is useful to understand the place of the Beacon Scheme amongst other instruments and initiatives. The list of options included: formal, external, national measures of performance which derive from central government policy and regulation and which included CPA and Best Value; and informal measures which included local reputation and benchmarking. Beacon status was included as one of the twelve measures.

Overall, there was not much change in perceptions of the measures, and the extent to which each contributed to respondents' views of their local authority performance remained fairly consistent (see Table 10, which shows the extent to which measures of performance are perceived to contribute to respondents' view of the authority in which they work, for each year). In both the 2004 and 2006 surveys, the measures that had the most impact on respondents' perceptions of performance were CPA; reputation in the local area/region; and national performance indicators. In both surveys, the

three measures that respondents perceived to be least influential were quality awards (e.g. Chartermark); benchmarking with national network; and Beacon status.

Respondents perceived that a number of measures had become less influential in 2006, compared with the 2004 survey, although only three of these were statistically significant results. The three measures that were perceived to have a significantly reduced influence were:

- External audit and review of service sector (e.g. OFSTED);
- Best value review of specific service;
- Benchmarking with national network.

However we note from earlier results in this section that respondents perceived significant constraints from audit and inspection, so it may be that councils (and specific services within councils) make distinctions between audit and inspection regimes and may perceive for example that OFSTED is less effective as a measure of the authority than, for example, CPA.

**Table 10:** Extent to which measures of performance contribute to view of authority, 2004 and 2006

	2004	2006	t	df	p
Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)	4.07	3.95	1.67	621	0.094
Reputation in local area/region	3.81	3.83	-0.34	679	0.736
National performance indicators	3.77	3.75	0.24	681	0.808
External audit and review of service sector (e.g. OFSTED) ***	<b>3.76</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>0.007</b>
Local performance indicators	3.72	3.71	0.07	677	0.948
National reputation	3.56	3.57	-0.04	674	0.966
Best value review of specific service ***	<b>3.52</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>3.97</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Peer review	3.33	3.26	0.86	658	0.387
Benchmarking with local network	3.33	3.22	1.38	673	0.169
Benchmarking with national network *	<b>3.26</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>2.01</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>0.044</b>
Quality awards (e.g. Chartermark)	3.16	3.08	1.08	669	0.280
Beacon status	2.87	2.87	0.09	641	0.930

\*\*\* Differences are significant (p0.001) \*\* (p0.01) \* (p0.05)

# Chapter 6

## Policy implications

### 6.1 Local authority engagement with the Beacon Scheme

The repeat survey coincided with a period during which local authorities came under increased pressure from external sources, in particular from government policy initiatives which required them to undergo increased external assessment and intervention and to demonstrate improved performance and efficiency (for example CPA and the Gershon report). At the same time authorities were under pressure at local and sub-regional levels, caused by increasing expectations of partner agencies, citizens and customers.

The Government's approach to reform of public services has tended to develop as a series of policy measures, that have not always had clear linkages and that have been presented as a single system only relatively recently (Cabinet Office 2006).

The Beacon research has focused primarily on one of these policy measures, which is intended to develop learning and capacity as a means to improve performance. In addition, the research has explored perceptions of the relationships between the Beacon Scheme and some of the other policy instruments aimed at reform of public services. For example, the research has examined the perceived relationships between capacity-building and learning achieved through the Beacon Scheme, and other policy initiatives focused on performance management and measurement, such as external audit and inspection.

The four elements of the systematic model presented in the Cabinet Office report on public service reform – performance management; market incentives; user voice; and capability and capacity – have not been developed as policies with equal weight but it is argued in the report that an appropriate mix of each is required that needs to be carefully tailored to the characteristics of each public service. This model and its implications have yet to be developed and fully understood by local authorities. The Cabinet Office report argues that top down pressures focused on performance targets, regulation, assessment and intervention have brought benefits in improving outcomes but have had limitations which include the creation of perverse incentives and stifling innovation and local initiatives. Building capability and capacity, the fourth quadrant of the model aimed at leadership, motivation, skills and managing change appears less developed than the other aspects of the model. The Beacon Scheme, which is one of the best established

national policy measures for encouraging learning and capacity worryingly, is not referred to in the document as a policy measure for building capacity.

The longitudinal survey research reported here found increased appreciation of the Beacon Scheme as a policy mechanism which is distinctive from other elements of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA). Compared with many other LGMA initiatives it seeks to drive improvement through learning with and from peers in other local authorities, and assumes significant benefit from best practice information and encouraging networking with peers. These results indicate that local authorities perceive distinct benefits from policy measures that encourage improvement through collective and collaborative methods and through approaches which focus initially on sharing practical examples of established good practice and innovation.

The Beacon Scheme has demonstrable, specific benefits for Beacon authorities, which include raising their national profile, boosting staff morale and increasing the amount of knowledge and ideas gained from other local authorities. Beacon status has had a positive lasting effect and has motivated further service improvement. Such organisational achievements are amongst the objectives of the public service reform model.

However, the research found that linkages between the Beacon Scheme and other policy mechanisms for local government modernisation are no clearer than two years previously. On the one hand, respondents report continued and increased value of the Scheme for learning with and from other local authorities about the complex processes of achieving improvement. They made changes in policy and practice as a direct consequence of learning from peers through the Scheme. On the other hand, the research coincided with the introduction of national and regional capacity building programmes but respondents reported no increase in perception that the Beacon Scheme helps with organisational capacity in 2006, compared with 2004. This result suggests that the Beacon Scheme is not being perceived in relation to capacity building as one of the four building blocks of public service improvement and this appears to be a missed opportunity for local authorities and for central government.

Between 2004 and 2006, resources available for organisational learning and change in local authorities appear to have become more restricted by workload pressures, constrained finances and lack of capacity of the council. Respondents in the 2006 survey reported that they would make less use of all sources of learning for making improvements than they did in 2004.

During this period, performance assessment appears to have remained considerably more important than capacity building and improvement and innovation awards. **The measure that had the most impact on respondents' perceptions of their own local authority's performance and approach to improvement continued to be CPA, compared with the Beacon Scheme which was reported to have had the least impact.** One possible interpretation of these results is that respondents perceived a

mandatory system of performance measurement that leads to a judgement of the whole council to be of greater importance than a voluntary scheme, which may predominantly affect perceptions of the performance of a single department or section of the local authority. Another possible interpretation is that respondents perceived the reporting of improvement against national indicators to be a more important aspect of performance than the practical measures taken, including learning, to achieve that improvement.

Respondents reported that their preferred sources of learning to make improvement were their Service Improvement Plans and internal programmes of improvement, compared with programmes of capacity building and the Beacon Scheme.

These respective priorities and constraints are likely to have negatively influenced allocation of resources for organisational learning and change, placing increased emphasis on performance regimes, efficiency and measurement. Such pressures on available human and financial resources continue to present a problem for some Beacon authorities, and it is likely that the resource deficit has an impact on both creating and sustaining innovation in those local authorities.

## 6.2 Learning and change as a result of the Beacon Scheme

**The survey research found that participation in all of the Beacon learning activities increased significantly between 2004 and 2006. The perceived value of the Beacon Scheme for learning between authorities continued to grow** and there was perceived value in the range of dissemination activities available. Face-to-face methods and in situ methods continued to have the highest participation rates. The increased participation in Beacon events suggests that in spite of pressures that might draw them into other, resource-intensive, activities such as performance assessment, **local authorities continue to perceive learning as an important aspect of their approach to improving services.**

The extent of **learning from participation in Beacon learning events and activities has been maintained and has increased slightly over the two year period. Respondents reported in both surveys that they tended to learn most about specific processes and practices of achieving improvements in services.** The types of changes that were implemented appear firstly to focus specifically on revised policy and strategy and secondly derive most closely from practical aspects. **These survey results indicate the value of the Beacon Scheme as one of the relatively few policy initiatives that has a focus on learning about effective strategies and processes for implementing specific service based changes.**

There appear to be some contradictions between the research results. Local councils perceive assessment (CPA; national performance indicators),

capacity building (Beacon; quality awards) and learning (local, regional and national) to be important. On the one hand, the Beacon Scheme is perceived by local authorities to be of sustained and increased value as a means to make practical improvements and increase capacity within specific services. Respondents reported that they brought knowledge into their authorities from peer organisations that led to innovation, learning and improvement. This included process knowledge about how to make improvements. On the other hand, respondents reported that national systems of audit and inspection were of greater importance in terms of perceptions of local authority performance and that service plans were an important source of learning for making improvement. These research results suggest that there is not a clearly understood relationship between the processes of improvement and capacity building (such as learning and sharing good practice) and the outcome of such processes (such as an improvement over time as measured by a national indicator). This apparently weak relationship in practice indicates a similarly unclear relationship at the policy level, where the policy emphasis on outcomes has been greater than the emphasis on processes. The research also suggests that local authority resources have been increasingly targeted towards supporting national assessment measures and outcomes, at the cost of their resources for learning.

The research indicates that contrary to common assumptions, performance goals can in some circumstances have a deleterious effect on performance at work (Seijts and Latham 2005). High performance is related to individual ability, as well as motivation. In situations where an employee requires new knowledge or skills to make improvements, performance goals are not likely to be effective. Instead, a learning goal framed in terms of knowledge or skill acquisition and with a focus on discovery of effective task processes, is more likely to increase the employee's ability. A performance goal can be used subsequently to increase motivation to implement new knowledge.

In the Beacon Scheme this sequence is likely to occur. A knowledge gap is identified, practical learning takes place between authorities and subsequently local authority personnel (officers and members) draw on new knowledge to adapt, plan, and implement a performance improvement in their own organisation. Learning goals are particularly relevant where step change or innovation is sought.

The Beacon Scheme has the potential to contribute significantly more to public service reform than it has done to date. The relationships between learning, improved performance and organisational capacity have yet to become clear for local authorities. The research evidence suggests that the Beacon Scheme is perceived as helping to develop understanding of best practice but this new knowledge is not perceived to be directly related to capacity building. The emphasis on assessment and measurement appears to be directing an increasing proportion of local authority resources away from organisational learning. To contribute fully and effectively to public service reform, the Scheme needs to be understood, implemented and appreciated within a coherent model, such as the one offered by the Cabinet Office,

where knowledge, learning and capacity can combine with other dimensions to create a 'self-improving system'. The Scheme needs to be clearly linked with other elements of public service reform so that its potential benefits can be more fully realised and utilised to strengthen some of the acknowledged weaknesses in other elements of the public sector reform agenda.

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# Appendix 1: Notes on statistical terms and analytical methods used in report

The **mean** is the average score for a particular question, as answered by the whole group or specific sub-group of respondents who completed the survey. It gives an indication of the typical or representative answer that officers and elected members have made to that question.

**The Standard Deviation (SD)** is the measure of how much variation there is in those answers among the whole group who completed the survey. Where a question or set of questions has the same top and bottom potential score (eg a respondent can score between 1 and 5) then the larger SD means more variation.

In some analyses, statistical tests are performed to see whether there are **differences between groups** (eg differences between managers in 2004 and 2006 in their mean scores). The test indicates whether the difference is large and stable enough to be important or whether the difference is either occurring by chance.

**Confidence intervals** are constructed to specify how confident we want to be of knowing the range of the scores from the whole group of respondents to one question or set of questions. A 95% confidence interval for example is constructed to create limits within which we can be 95% sure that our results fall between two specific values. The larger the sample and the smaller the amount of variation, the more confident we can be in the results of the tests.

**N:** Number of data points or observations the analysis is based on.

The **p value** or probability value is used to decide whether the result of a test is statistically significant or not. In other words, is the test result as extreme or more extreme than that observed by chance alone? For example, if the p value is less than 0.05, this means that the differences (or associations) found in the data would occur less than 5 per cent of the time - or less than 1 time in 20 - by chance. However, if the p value is 0.05 or over, we would say that the result is not statistically significant and could occur as a result of chance or other factors.

**T-tests** are used to determine whether the means of two sets of data are different. A **t-value** is calculated based on the t-distribution.

**Chi square ( $\chi^2$ )** is used to assess the “goodness of fit” between an obtained set of frequencies in a random sample and what is expected under a given statistical hypothesis.

**df: Degrees of freedom** is a measure of the number of independent pieces of information on which the precision of a parameter estimate is based. The degrees of freedom (df) for an estimate equals the number of observations (values) minus the number of additional parameters estimated for that calculation.

# Appendix 2: Explanation of Analyses

For all the data the comparisons are only based on items that were used in both surveys.

## Figure 1: Perceptions of the Beacon Scheme 2004 and 2006

This graph shows the mean scores within the two surveys for items describing the **perceptions of the Beacon Scheme**. 1="Strongly disagree", 2="Disagree", 3="Neither agree nor disagree", 4="Agree" 5="Strongly agree".

In addition to the means table 2 also states the t-value, the degrees of freedom and the exact p-values of the t-test conducted to compare the means within the two samples. Significant differences are highlighted in bold. The significance level is indicated by the number of asterisks.

## Table 3: Perceptions of the costs and benefits of Beacon status 2004 and 2006

This table shows the means within the two samples for items describing agreement with statements about the **costs and benefits of Beacon status**

(1="Strongly disagree", 2="Disagree", 3="Neither agree nor disagree", 4="Agree" 5="Strongly agree"). For the t-tests, t-value, the degrees of freedom and the exact p-values are stated.

## Table 4: Reported degree of success of mechanisms used by Beacon councils to disseminate good practice 2004 and 2006

The sample for this analysis contained only authorities which have employed the dissemination events as Beacons in the last two years before the survey (see descriptives for exact counts). The means of the **success of different dissemination mechanisms** for the 2004 and 2006 sample are compared (1="Very unsuccessful", 2="Unsuccessful", 3="Neither/nor", 4="Successful", 5="Very successful") and t-values, degrees of freedom and the exact p-values are stated.

## Figure 2 and Table 5: Percentage of respondents attending Beacon events and making use of learning activities 2004 and 2006

The graph depicts the percentages of respondents within each sample who attended the different types of **Beacon events and learning activities**.

The table summarises the results of the chi-square test comparing the proportions within the two samples and states the value of the chi-square statistic, the degrees of freedom and p-value.

**Figure 3 Percentage of respondents who did some form of preparation prior to a Beacons dissemination event 2004 and 2006**

The graph shows the percentages of respondents within each sample who did at least **one activity prior to participating in a Beacons event**.

**Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who undertook preparatory activities prior to attending a Beacon event 2004 and 2006**

The graph shows the percentages of respondents within each sample who stated that they have done **a particular activity prior to participating in a Beacons event**. Significant differences between the percentages in 2004 and 2006 (Chi-square test) are indicated by asterisks which also give the significance level.

**Figure 5: Average number of different activities used to prepare for a Beacon dissemination event 2004 and 2006**

Is self-explanatory.

**Figures 6 and Table 6 Extent of learning from Beacon events 2004 and 2006**

The graph shows the means for the two samples. 1="not relevant to me", 2="hardly anything at all", 3="a little", 4="a fair amount", 5="a great deal". The table contains the t-values, the degrees of freedom and the exact p-values of the t-tests conducted. Means that are significantly different are highlighted in bold with the significance level indicated by asterisks.

**Table 7: Percentage of respondents implementing changes as a result of ideas generated by the Beacon Scheme 2004 and 2006**

The table contains the percentages of respondents within each sample who stated that a specific **change has been implemented** as a result of ideas generated by the Beacon Scheme. The value of the chi-square statistic, the degrees of freedom and p-value describe the results of the chi-square test comparing the proportions within the two samples. Significant differences are highlighted in bold with the significance level indicated by asterisks.

**Table 8: Extent to which source of learning drawn upon to support improvements 2004 and 2006**

Means of ratings regarding the extent to which different sources of learning were used for both samples. Range of values: 1="To a very little extent", 2="To a little extent", 3="To some extent", 4="To a great extent", 5="To a

very great extent". Includes t-values, degrees of freedom and the exact p-values from the t-tests.

**Table 9: Extent to which factors perceived as restrictive of organisational learning and change 2004 and 2006**

Table includes the average ratings regarding the restrictiveness of several factors (Scale: 0="Not at all", 1="To a very little extent", 2="To a little extent", 3="To some extent", 4="To a great extent", 5="To a very great extent") and the t-values, the degrees of freedom and the exact p-values from the different t-tests.

**Table 10: Extent to which measures of performance contribute to view of authority 2004 and 2006**

This table shows the mean ratings of the extent of contribution to the view of authority for the different performance measures within the two surveys. Scale used: 1="To a very little extent", 2="To a little extent", 3="To some extent", 4="To a great extent", 5="To a very great extent. The t-values, the degrees of freedom and the exact p-values for the conducted t-test are reported. Significant differences are highlighted in bold and the significance level is indicated by the number of asterisks.