

## **CRITICAL FRIENDING – GUIDANCE ON WRITTEN AGREEMENTS**

While colleagues in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit emphasise the importance of written agreements in the critical friend process, there is no formal template to abide by and one must be guided entirely by:

- what the organisation with the need believes they want; and
- what resource the critical friend can devote.

This should be set down in writing, but in a note rather than a contract. The role of the written agreement is to ensure that all parties are clear as to expectations. Key, however, is the fact that what the requesting department initially asks for help on, will not necessarily be what they actually need help with. Recognising this, the preliminary meeting between the requesting department and the critical friend provides an opportunity to explore the perceived problem/issue and to define what areas the critical friend will assist with.

Following the initial meeting, either the critical friend or the department should draft an informal note. This should then be issued as appropriate to the critical friend or department for agreement. The note should outline the following areas:

- what they perceive the nature of the problem to be;
- what resource the critical friend can devote to this (specifying if possible number of people, who and days);
- what they would hope to achieve as an outcome; and
- when a review of the effectiveness of the intervention by critical friends will take place. The agreement should leave it loose as to whether this review will bring the work to an end (the review may highlight that more work is needed).