

Local Services Inspectorate Forum Newsletter No 23 (July 2004)

Programme of work

The LSIF meeting on 12 July focused on the steps being taken to progress the Forum's programme of work on co-ordination and proportionality and cost benefit analysis.

Proportionality

Work is already underway to identify further detail on each type of inspection undertaken by LSIF Inspectorates in respect of proportionality with a view to identifying examples and principles that are emerging around a proportionate approach. The Forum's Co-ordination Project Group confirmed there is already a general common understanding among the represented Inspectorates around principles, depth and frequency of inspection.

Inspection Activity

Information from inspection programmes is currently being collated to inform the LSIF and Audit and Inspection databases. These databases currently only include inspection activity of LSIF member Inspectorates and consideration will be given to tackling information gaps.

A study to establish the impact of inspection on councils to determine the degree of inspection councils' experience from organisations outside the Forum is being considered. Although thinking around this study is still at an early stage, it is envisaged that this study would be taken forward with a sample of volunteer councils.

Councils are being involved in the analysis process of capturing and categorising costs as opposed to using a model of anticipated cost. This work will continue to identify what is and what is not achievable in terms of identifying the costs and benefits of inspection at a theoretical level, including the development of a set formula approach.

Local Government Re-organisation

Preliminary discussions were held on the possible re-organisation of local government which may affect three regions - NE, NW and Yorkshire and the Humber if a 4 November referendum delivers a positive vote and the implications such a re-organisation would have for inspection and Inspectorates.

Although no decision would be taken on an approach until the referendum had taken place. It was agreed that further discussions should be taken place to establish an agreed and co-ordinated way forward.

Children's Services

Discussions are still being held around the CPA / Joint Area Review interface. Consultation on the framework is expected to commence in November.

Barriers to : Joint Working and Co-ordination

The Forum's Co-ordination Group in progressing this work is adopting a self-critical approach. The group is looking more deeply at previously highlighted barriers to joint working to identify issues that are still to be addressed and to consider how these should be handled.

While the Forum has made progress in co-ordinating activities across its member Inspectorates, the local government remit of the Forum was seen as restrictive to wider co-ordination. Some inspection bodies did not feel it was appropriate for them to be round the LSIF table if their activities are largely outside local government. It was recognised that there was a need for greater understanding of the different nature of inspection and to separate inspection aimed at improving services and providing assurance from regulatory inspection. Calls were also made by Members for consideration to be given to the link between inspection and improvement to establish which services improve without inspection and why.

Cost Benefit Analysis

Good progress has already been made in sharing information and identifying good practice principles.

Consideration has been given to the advantages of two different approaches to impact measurement. Agreement in principle has also been sought on a common period over which benefits should be measured.

Local Government Events and Publications:

July 27	Publication - Local Area Agreement Prospectus
July 30	Publication - Audit Commission Annual Report
September 20	Local Services Inspectorate Forum
September 26-30	Labour Party Conference
November 11/12	AC consultation on CPA service blocks/resources
November 15	Local Services Inspectorate Forum
November 25	AC publication of consultation on CPA service blocks/resources & corporate assessment theme weightings, rules etc.

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- **Sheila Brown**, Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)
- **David Behan**, Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
- **Anna Walker**, Healthcare Commission
- **Steve Bundred**, Audit Commission

- **Roy Irwin**, Housing Inspectorate
- **Chris Bull**, Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI)
- **Sir Keith Povey**, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)
- **Maureen Brown**, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)
- **Frances Done**, Audit Commission
- **Andy Hurdle**, Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
- **Sir Graham Meldrum**, HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)
- **Peter Morphew**, Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)
- **Andrew Bridges**, HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP)
- **Sally Hammond**, Audit Commission
- **Marc Heasman**, Benefit Fraud Inspectorate
- **Jo Killian**, Audit Commission
- **Sarah Sturrock**, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)