



Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Creating sustainable communities



Briefing 02

A guide to the evaluation research

The research programme

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has commissioned the Institute of Local Government Studies (Inlogov) at Birmingham University to evaluate the local government procurement agenda. This four-year programme of research aims to:

Help local government...

- to implement the National Procurement Strategy and to further improve procurement practice.

Help the Regional Centres of Procurement Excellence...

- to develop and implement their Business Plans by providing an information base and information on progress and change over the coming years.

Help policy-makers...

- by informing development of a ten year vision and strategy for local government and policies on procurement.
- by monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of procurement policies and initiatives.

The research programme will use a range of different methods to gather information and understanding about local government procurement. These methods will include interviews, case studies, and the collection of data through surveys of local authorities in England.

Outputs from the research programme will include:

- **Baseline and evaluation reports** that will provide information on 'what works' (and 'why' and 'how'), and the impact of procurement policies on the services delivered locally to citizens.
- **Reports on key areas** such as the handling of workforce matters, the development of local authority trading, new powers for joint working, and the role of elected members in procurement.

Completed reports will be published on the ODPM website as well as in paper copy.

The Annual Surveys

An important part of the research programme will be national surveys of all local authorities in England. These will be done each autumn from 2004 to 2008. The surveys will focus on the processes and outcomes of procurement in local government. The research will also analyse trends in procurement spend and contracts.

The research team will contact each local authority to make links with a senior officer who can provide information about both *strategic* and *operational* aspects of procurement.

Focused research

Alongside the national surveys, and the overall process and impact evaluations, the research programme includes several focused research projects:

Handling of workforce matters. This project will review how staff are transferred through outsourcing and the long-term and short-term impacts of this, including the effects on outsourced workforces. The research team will work with key stakeholders (TUC, CBI, LGA, and ODPM) to assess evidence collected through case studies, interviews, and surveys.

Local authority trading. This project will review the extent, value, and nature of local authority trading in goods and services. It will also identify areas for future developments.

New powers for joint working. This project will provide information on how authorities are responding to new powers granted by the forthcoming Section 16 Order.

A study of the role of elected members in procurement. This project will use discussion groups, surveys, and interviews to assess members' views about their actual, and preferred, roles in local government procurement.

Research links and synergies

An Analysis of the Local Government Market

The ODPM has also commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to conduct a strategic review of the local government services markets. Sitting alongside the Procurement Evaluation, this research will help local government and policy-makers:

- to understand how policy and practice can ensure that local authorities fully exploit individual markets and so achieve service improvement; and
- to ensure that these markets develop so that they are both contestable and competitive in order to support aims for public service reform in local government.

Evaluating the Local Government Modernisation Agenda as a whole

The research on local government procurement is part of a wider evaluation of the local government modernisation agenda. This includes evaluations of some of the most important changes in local government over the last five years. The procurement research feeds into the overall evaluation of local government modernisation.

Data collection by the Regional Centres of Excellence and the IDeA

The research will take account of the survey work that has already been carried out by the Centres of Excellence and the IDeA, and will avoid duplication wherever possible.

The research team

The research team is led by Michael Hughes, of the Institute of Local Government Studies. It includes researchers from Inlogov, from Cardiff and Warwick Business Schools, and is supported by the research company *BMG research*. The team has a well-established record of work on procurement issues, with publications aimed at practitioner, policy, and academic audiences.

Further information

For further information on:

1) The Evaluation of the Local Government Procurement Agenda:

- please contact Michael Hughes, INLOGOV, University of Birmingham (michael.hughes@bham.ac.uk)
- Or have a look at the website www.inlogov.bham.ac.uk.

2) Other research mentioned here:

- please contact Demelza Birch, ODPM (demelza.birch@odpm.gsi.gov.uk)