

Audit Summary Report

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Data Quality Arrangements - stages 2 & 3 Feedback

District of Easington Council

Audit 2006/2007

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Introduction

- 1 We have carried out a detailed review of the District of Easington Council's corporate management arrangements for data quality. Similar reviews have been undertaken at each of the Audit Commission's local government audited bodies.
- 2 This work on Data Quality has three stages as detailed below.

Audit approach

- **Stage 1 (Management Arrangements)**
 - The assessment of Easington's corporate management arrangements for data quality using Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE's) developed by the Audit Commission.
 - Assessments are made on a 1 to 4 basis (4 being the highest), with a score of 2 representing adequate or effective arrangements.
 - This work contributes to the auditor's conclusion under the Code of Audit Practice on an audited body's arrangements to secure value for money. The work relates specifically to the arrangements for 'monitoring and reviewing performance, including arrangements to ensure data quality'.
- **Stage 2 (Completeness Check)**
 - The review of queries on individual BVPIs submitted to the Audit Commission by the Council and the collection and analysis of specified non BVPIs.
 - The number and extent of these queries are determined by the Audit Commission following their review of data nationally.
- **Stage 3 (Data Quality spot checks)**
 - The detailed audit of individual BVPIs.
 - The number of BVPIs selected for review was determined by the outcomes of Stages 1 and 2, and were selected from a list developed by the Audit Commission.

Main conclusions

Data Quality Stage 1

- 3 We have previously issued a report providing feedback to the Council on our findings over each of the five areas covered within our Stage 1 review, namely:
 - governance and leadership;
 - policies and procedures;

- systems and processes;
 - people and skills; and
 - data use.
- 4 In summary we concluded that overall arrangements were adequate, but that there were areas where strengthening was required in the areas bulleted below:
- lack of policy and strategy - hence no clear statement and nothing in Corporate Plan etc
 - gaps in formalised procedures - potential for inconsistency - should have procedures in place for all
 - lack of consideration of data quality in corporate risk assessment - missing importance of good data quality for decision making
 - extend protocols for data sharing
 - address weaknesses in security of data outlined in recent Audit Commission report
 - lack of an agreed business continuity plan and the potential impact on data
 - perform the planned levels of checking of each PI which is being introduced
 - develop the role of members more and identify one with clear responsibility for data quality
 - develop milestones, targets and responsibilities for delivery of the action plan

Completeness check Stage 2

- 5 Only three of Easington's best value PIs were identified by the Audit Commission as warranting a completeness check, to ensure that variances were either within expectations or could be explained. In each case we were able to confirm that the indicator was reasonable and represented a real change in actual performance.
- 6 In addition we also carried out a reasonableness check on five non BVPIs. Again we were able to conclude that variances were either within expectations or could be explained.
- 7 Appendix 1 provides detailed feedback.

Spot checks Stage 3

- 8 Our assessment at Stage 1 was that the Council has arrangements in place for data quality and represent a medium risk. This resulted in the selection of three PIs for spot checking:
- Recycling (BVPI 82a);
 - Composting (BVPI 82b);
 - Non decent homes (BVPI 184a)

- 9 The recycling and composting PIs did not require amendment. However we identified several reservations about the process for collating the proportion of the Council's housing stock that did not meet the decent homes standard. The extent of these concerns was such that we concluded that the indicator was flawed and that information was not available to provide a correct value. The indicator was therefore qualified on the grounds of uncertainty.
- 10 We have written separately to officers to alert them to our concerns and the qualification of this indicator. In summary the errors are threefold, but can be aggregated to a concern that the dynamic changes to the housing stock have not been adequately reflected in the determination of decent / non-decent home categorisations. The specific errors identified are that:
 - Where works have been done on improving properties, no assessment has been made as to whether the criteria for decent homes standard has been met on an individual property basis. Rather a pre-determined proportion of properties worked on have been re-categorised, although the rationale for this approach is not clear (to officers or to us).
 - The number of non decent homes did not seem to get carried forward consistently from the end of one year to the start of the next . Officers were similarly unable to explain this
 - Numbers of decent / non decent homes have not been altered accurately in respect of disposals, whether through sales or demolitions. We would have expected that decent home records would be altered based on the category of each individual property sold, but again the pre-determined proportion has merely been applied to total disposals in the year.

Recommendation

R1 The Council should liaise with ALMO officers to ensure that arrangements regarding the monitoring of non-decent homes are strengthened so that the indicator is correctly stated in future years.

The Way Forward

- 11 Officers have already received feedback (either formally or informally) regarding the issues raised in this report and an agreed action plan exists in respect of recommendations arising from our Stage 1 audit.
- 12 We would welcome a meeting with officers to discuss the remaining recommendation, with a view to agreeing what further action may be appropriate.

Appendix 1 – Stage 2 completeness check

BVPI	Conclusion
109 planning speed	Increase in performance confirmed as real variance.
82a recycling	Change in performance confirmed as real variance.
82b composting	Change in performance confirmed as real variance.
184a non decent homes	Change in performance in line with expectations; PI therefore not identified for Stage 2 audit review by the Audit Commission, but sample tested as part of Stage 3 work. Indicator found to be flawed and audit qualification submitted.
183a temporary accommodation, bed and breakfast	Performance in line with expectations; PI therefore not identified for audit review.
183b temporary accommodation, hostels	Performance in line with expectations; PI therefore not identified for audit review.
Non BVPI	Conclusion
Average re-let times	Deterioration in stated performance confirmed as real variance.
Planned to responsive repairs	Improvement in stated performance confirmed as reasonable.
Private sector homes vacant for more than six months.	Increase in value of this indicator confirmed as reasonable.
Repeat homelessness.	Decrease in value of this indicator confirmed as reasonable.
Private sector unfit properties made fit.	Decrease in value of this indicator confirmed as reasonable.