
AUDIT COMMISSION STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2001

1 SUMMARY

This document puts forward proposals for a new strategy for the Audit Commission and asks questions as to how stakeholders feel it can best develop its plans to achieve this strategy

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Audit Commission has identified that, with the emphasis on the need to improve the delivery of public services, and the increase in the regulatory regime put in place to achieve this, their role needs to change. They wish to obtain stakeholders' views to enable them to shape, prioritise and ultimately delivery a new strategy.

2.2 Particular issues identified in the document are:

- The real test of success will be the widespread public perception that services have improved on the ground. It is the result that matters, not the process, and they feel that new expectations are driving a need for change.
- There are more than 130 regulatory bodies in the public sector. Regulation must be democratically accountable, cost effective and add value

2.3 In order to meet the challenges for the future, the Audit Commission intends to concentrate on four principal areas, conducting pilot schemes and undertaking specific studies in each of these areas:

2.3.1 Focus work on users' and the public's experience of services

- Carry out a study of best practice in engaging and understanding users
- Undertake user-focused studies based on user priorities. The initial study will relate to the needs of disabled children
- Develop a user focus in inspection, for example by extending reality checks and using lay inspectors
- Pilot a citizen-focused audit looking at issues that matter to local citizens
- Introduce user-friendly local reporting, setting out the performance of services in ways that local people can understand

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- Carry out locally focused research, evaluating services in geographical areas
 - Pilot a new writing style to provide information in a straightforward, accessible form

2.3.2 Help to improve public services by designing and deploying services differently and using their expertise more effectively

- Adopt a more hands-on approach to promote change
- Produce a range of cross-cutting studies in key areas
- Produce a range of think-pieces to influence national policy
- Develop and better-integrate local cross-cutting work
- Develop neighbourhood-based audit and inspection
- Co-ordinate the work of auditors and inspectors for all local authorities and NHS bodies in a local area
- Ensure that auditors can follow the public pound where responsibility has been delegated to partners
- Develop an advice and support capacity
- Develop products based on learning from inspection

2.3.3 Maximise the benefit and minimise the burden of regulation

- Better co-ordinate the audit and inspection activities
- Develop common principles for regulation and forge strategic partnerships with key audit and inspection partners
- Roll out radical plans for a new 'lighter-touch', lower-cost, audit regime
- Continue to work with government to streamline the best value process

2.3.4 Lead by example - by modernising themselves

- Share knowledge more effectively by using electronic communications
- Improve access to the Commission
- Review the governance structure of the Commission

3 CONSIDERATIONS

The Audit Commission is seeking feedback on these proposals in order to develop plans for the future and has issued a questionnaire that is to be returned to them by 26 October 2001. Our proposed responses are detailed in [appendix A](#).

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource implications cannot be evaluated until the Audit Commission's detailed plans for achieving their strategy are known.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Changes to the inspection/audit regime will be statutory

6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

Plans for the Audit Commission to undertake studies, and co-ordinate issues, at a local level will affect parishes.

7 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

Subject to Member consideration and comments, to agree the response detailed in appendix A.

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Background Papers:

Delivering Improvement Together – Audit Commission Strategy Consultation 2001

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