

Good practice guide to some alternative methods to intervention in local authorities

MORE OF...	LESS OF....
<p>Contestability and restructuring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flexibility on how local authorities organise themselves to achieve outcomes ○ Support for authorities providing services to others, enabling merger of back office functions and achievements of economies of scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Requirements to appoint specific officers or groups of services in particular ways ○ Uncertainty and instability from prolonged periods of structural change
<p>Regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessment of costs to local government and how these can be reduced ○ Close contact with front line and practitioner review to ensure quality control, getting it right first time ○ Systematic identification of opportunities to reduce bureaucracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regulation as first resort not last resort ○ Tight regulations which do not reflect diversity of service provision and have not been tested to reduce cost of implementation
<p>Engagement and Intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Differentiated approach – weak performance in a strong authority different from weak performance in a weak authority ○ Positive engagement through Local Public Service Agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low triggers for government intervention not based in adequate performance data
<p>Regulatory freedoms and flexibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flexibility for high performers ○ Managed flexibility for weaker performers to help them through capacity problems ○ Focus on performance standards more than prescriptive regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Requirements to prepare and/or submit plans ○ Regulation of how objective should be achieved not just standards of performance
<p>Management of relationships and communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two-way communication including the frontline ○ Working closely with local government from outset to diagnose problems and work out solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paper based untargeted communication that gets 'lost'
<p>Self-regulation and co-regulation</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on continuous performance improvement and joint diagnosis of barriers to improvement ○ Self –assessment and benchmarking, supported by feedback of performance info to local authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Departments not engaged with these locally and professionally driven agendas
<p>Capacity building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learning from the best authorities, supporting creativity and enabling innovation and roll-out of good practice ○ Investment to tackle staff and skills shortages and middle management development ○ Central government support for investment in IT capacity/standard software/back office efficiency ○ Joint diagnosis of the barriers to delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rushed change that diverts local managers ○ Rushed change that means computers and software are not ready on time ○ Uncoordinated and duplicated requests for information/data/inspection ○ Too many changes at the same time
<p>Targets, assessments and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear performance standards ○ Reliance on Comprehensive Performance Assessment and proportionate inspection regimes ○ Emphasis on local performance management and building capacity to improve it ○ Focus on needs and satisfaction of customer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collection of large quantities of data which is inadequately quantity controlled ○ Reliance on narrow targets and performance assessment overriding local priorities ○ Rigid cycles of inspection, not based on risk assessment or priorities

For further guidance you may find it helpful to contact Emily Hay on 0207 944 5851 at the Local Government Gateway in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister or similar Gateway colleagues in your own department responsible for effective working relationships with local government.