

**Department of Trade and Industry
Consumer and Competition Policy Directorate**

Responses to Consultation on Performance Measures for Trading Standards

The recent consultation on Trading Standards Performance Measures for 2004/5 aimed to give business, consumers and other interested parties an opportunity to comment on the proposed performance measures for the next financial year.

Performance Measures for Trading Standards for the year 2004/5 will shortly be issued taking into account comments arising from the consultation.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

There were 20 responses in total. 6 were from individual Councils. There was also a response from LACORS representing local government. There were 11 responses from groups representing areas of local Trading Standards Authorities. For example East of England Trading Standards Authorities (EETSA). In addition a response was received from the Institute of Public Finance and the Library of Local Performance Indicators.

A list of respondents is attached. Individual responses, where the respondent has not requested confidentiality will be available from the DTI Library.

MAIN FINDINGS AND DTI RESPONSES

1. There was constructive criticism of the measures used rather than criticism of the use of measures as a concept.

Response – The DTI welcomes the general recognition that Performance Measures for Trading Standards are useful. Feedback is welcomed to make information easier to collect and improve the usefulness of the data collected.

2. Respondents were generally supportive of the use of customer and business satisfaction surveys as a measure of performance. However many wished to include their own questions.

Response – There is no objection to additional questions being used, provided it is understood that only the core questions provided will form the basis of the measure. The guidance has been altered to make this clear.

3. Some authorities were concerned that there were references made to their complaints procedure in the survey questions. However

others considered such a question should be used in the customer surveys as well as the business.

Response – After consultation with the National Performance Framework Steering Group, survey questions to both business and consumers were altered. It was made clear in the questions that the complaints procedure referred to was that of the Local Authority, not the individual Trading Standards Department or to make a complaint about a trader. An additional survey question for consumers about the local authority complaints procedure was added.

4. Respondents almost unanimously agreed the following in relation to Performance Measure 3:
 - that businesses with both high and medium risk should be considered as part of the measure for % of business contacted within year.
 - that tables for 'Inspection' and 'Other Enforcement Activity' be kept separate.
 - that the compliance measure should be based on the number of businesses in contact with the Trading Standards Department rather than taking compliant businesses as a % of all businesses in the area.

Response – The comments were accepted and Performance Measure 3 amended where necessary.

5. Respondents were concerned the circumstances of repeated minor infringements did not fit in to the definitions of 'major infringement' in the guidance on Performance Measure 3.

Response – The guidance was altered to make clear 'repeated minor infringements' fell within the definition of 'major infringement'.

6. There was a mixture of views regarding what information should be retained or deleted as part of the contextual information. It was pointed out some of this information was already collected elsewhere.

Response – The DTI is committed both to reducing the amount of information local authorities are required to collect and ensuring that duplication of returns is kept to a minimum. Items 1.1 – 3.1 (16 items) in the Contextual Information Returns for 2003-4 will not appear in the Contextual Information Return for 2004/5.

RESPONDENTS

Crossing the Boundaries Partnership (5 Authorities)

Dorset County Council

East of England Trading Standards Authorities (EETSA) (10 Authorities)

East Midlands Co- Ordination on Trading Standards (EMCOTS) (8 Authorities)

Vikki Goddard – Library of Local Performance Indicators

Institute of Public Finance

London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Local Authority Co-ordination on Regulatory Services (LACORS)

Master Trader User Group (authorities using 'Master Trader' Software)

Midlands Co- ordination on Trading Standards (MIDCOTS) (11 Authorities)

Midland Shires Benchmarking Club

North East Trading Standards Authorities (NETSA) (12 Authorities)

North Yorkshire Trading Standards

NWML (Informal Comments)

Society of Chief Officers in Scotland (SCOTSS) (32 Authorities)

South East Trading Standards Authorities (SETSA)

South West Regional Co-ordination on Trading Standards (SWERCOTS)

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

West Dunbartonshire Council

Welsh Heads of Trading Standards Service (WHOTS) (21 Authorities)

Wokingham District Council

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