

Newsletter 2001/02

Introduction

Welcome to the 2001/02 Local and Regional Government Research Programme Annual Newsletter. The newsletter provides details of new projects to be commissioned in 2001/02 and updates on current projects and recent research findings. It also outlines a programme of longer-term research projects to be set up over the next 3-5 years.

The Local and Regional Government Programme contributes research-based information for policy development and evaluation on the major elements of local government and regional governance such as the role and structure of local and regional government, democratic renewal, service delivery, management and finance. The programme has continued to expand since its start in 1988/89. The budget for 2001/02 is £1.57m.

We are keen to generate interest amongst research contractors and welcome expressions of interest both from those who have worked for us in the past and those who are new to the programme. If you wish to be considered when we draw up shortlists for invitation to tender, please complete and return the enclosed form to us at the address given on it. If you have any general questions or comments about the research programme, or the work of the Unit, please contact:

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New projects for 2001/02 include:

- Delivery of Best Value reviews
- Resource implications of Best Value
- Performance indicator/target development
- The measurement of cost-effectiveness
- Geographical mapping (GIS) of BVPI user satisfaction data
- A qualitative understanding of satisfaction and the expectations that form it
- Measuring satisfaction with community leadership and the new ethical framework
- The nature and extent of public participation

continued overleaf



Service Quality



Participation



Finance



Management



Regions

New projects for 2001/02 include *(continued)*:

- Development of Overview and Scrutiny
- Factors affecting the willingness to stand for office
- Nature of misconduct allegations in local authorities
- Number and nature of misconduct allegations in parish/town councils
- Beacon Councils – thematic and general performance research
- Preliminary research on the use of the well-being power and other extensions of local government powers
- Preliminary lessons from Local Strategic Partnerships
- A national survey on the nature and extent of electronic service delivery
- Electronic voting
- Further research on fixed and variable costs
- Good practice guidance on the strategic approach to consultation on local authority expenditure
- Public attitudes to local expenditure and service diversity
- CIPFA accounting code for a new prudential system
- Public knowledge and use of information on local authority expenditure
- Measuring RDA delivery against targets
- The impact of regional policies on inter-regional concerns and national priorities
- Measuring the flow of public funds into regions
- Regional identity, awareness of (and attitudes to) regions and support for regional government
- Membership of regional assemblies: review of potential structures
- Voting arrangements for regional assemblies: review of options and implications

Medium and long-term projects (3-5 years) include:

- Small area analysis of BVPIs
- Process evaluation of Local-PSAs
- Standards of conduct, public opinion and the role of media coverage
- Local authorities as community leaders
- Long-term evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships
- Impact of new and emerging technologies on local government
- Preparing for a new capital finance system
- Research on rate reliefs

New Projects for 2001/02 and Medium/Long-Term Projects

If you would like to express an interest in tendering for any of these projects, please return the enclosed forms as soon as possible.

Best Value and Service Delivery

1. Delivery of Best Value reviews

The research programme has recently let a five-year contract for a long-term evaluation of the impact of Best Value. This will cover the outcomes of Best Value reviews rather than the processes themselves in detail. Research is required to explore the operation of the Best Value review process to inform policy development on reviews and potential further statutory guidance. The particular focus is on how to design and carry out reviews which deliver major gains or step changes in service delivery and, similarly, how to design and implement reviews that can effectively address cross-cutting and thematic issues leading to direct and measureable outcomes. In examining these issues, the research would need to review a wide range of potential methodologies, including several of those currently being used, such as EFQM and BEM, to assess their strengths and limitations.

2. Resource implications of Best Value

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

A gap in evidence at present is the resource implications of Best Value, in terms of officers' and members' time and the costs of processes associated with Best Value, as compared with the benefits that flow from improved efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. A specific example could be taken from procurement where there is little or no up-to-date, detailed information on exactly how much local authorities are spending on procurement and commissioning, both in terms of type of procurement and each element of the procurement process. Research developing potential methodologies for assessing costs and benefits of Best Value would be useful for the next Comprehensive Spending Review and in identifying exactly where savings and improvements might be made. This project will be undertaken in-house but would draw upon the call-off analysis element of the long-term Best Value evaluation that has been commissioned from Cardiff Business School.

3. Performance indicator/target development

Research is needed to help inform policy thinking and planned guidance in late 2001 on the development of BVPI top quartiles and performance targeting generally as part of the statutory performance management framework. Key issues to be addressed include: an assessment of the extent to which top quartile targets work to narrow the range of performance and improve the level of performance overall; what are the most appropriate performance indicators to include amongst top quartiles, particularly in terms of policy development; what should be the classifications of authorities for the purpose of setting top quartiles; and, how do these targets relate to others being set for local authorities, including the GIDA floor targets.

4. The measurement of cost-effectiveness

A research project is required to provide advice on the annual requirement of how to put together the basket of national indicators for the measurement of the national PSA on Local Government Cost Effectiveness. Given the changing nature of the indicators available, it is likely that this or similar research will be needed year on year.

5. Small area analysis of BVPIs

When fully validated data is available on the first year of BVPIs and following a project currently in the research programme looking at methods for disaggregating BVPIs to the small area level, it will be of benefit to undertake some initial analysis on selected topics. For example, research could examine the most deprived wards, the most satisfied wards and the most dissatisfied wards (across a range of areas, both spatially and in administrative tiers) based on the small area analysis data. There are two potential strands:

- to look at the most deprived wards in England (based on the IMD)
- to look at the most satisfied and dissatisfied wards within England.

The study could analyse the links between deprivation and satisfaction with service delivery. It could also be used as a lesson learning exercise by exploring in-depth the differences and similarities between neighbourhoods whose residents reported high levels of satisfaction and those neighbourhoods where residents were very dissatisfied. In-depth interviews might then follow with service providers and residents to ascertain the nature and extent of different methods of service delivery. This is only one example but there is potential for numerous other areas of investigation

Local PSAs

6. Process evaluation of Local-PSAs

A process evaluation is needed for the rolled-out LPSA Scheme. This should be able to draw on the evaluation of the pilot negotiation of LPSAs, but will extend beyond the earlier work to understand what processes government departments, authorities and their partners put in place to deliver on the Agreements and to identify best practice lessons. Research will also be needed to assess the medium- and long-term impact of LPSAs. To some extent, the Agreements will provide their own basis for evaluation in terms of measurement of the extent to which authorities have achieved the targets. However, there will need to be a more fundamental evaluation to assess whether and to what extent LPSAs:

- acted as a stimulus to help LAs deliver key national and local priorities, exceeding expected performance;
- stimulated changes in central Government;
- encouraged innovation and commitment to better performance;
- promoted more joined up working within the local authority and with partners, whether in public, private or voluntary sectors;
- provided a testbed for freedoms and flexibilities that could subsequently be rolled out more widely; and
- made it harder to secure improvements in other services.

In particular, the impact evaluation will need to isolate the impact of LPSAs from exogenous variables – establishing the extent to which outcomes can be related to the Agreements (and related freedoms and flexibilities), or other factors. It would also need to identify and measure LPSAs' additionality, deadweight, synergy, displacement and unintended effects.

Citizens' attitudes and satisfaction

7. Geographical mapping (GIS) of BVPI user satisfaction data

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

As local authorities start to send in the results of the BVPI user satisfaction surveys, it will be of benefit to map these data using a Geographical Information System. This will allow analysis that cuts across local authority boundaries (for example to look at deprived neighbourhoods that may be physically located across authorities) and also to analyse patterns that emerge spatially. A further benefit is that data can be 're-cut' for longitudinal analysis to take into account boundary changes.

8. A qualitative understanding of satisfaction and the expectations that form it

There are a number of questions, which are implicit in any discussion of satisfaction. For example:

- what does (dis)satisfied/very (dis)satisfied actually mean to different people?
- what standards do people accept – are they minimum standards or unrealistic targets?
- how does 'satisfied' vary across different sub-groupings? across wards?
- what are the expectations of service delivery for different services; in different areas; by different groups of people; by different users?
- are expectations rising? are they sustainable?

Gap analysis is a market research technique that looks at comparing satisfaction in relation to expectations. An example would be a questionnaire on the planning service sent to applicants in a given local authority. In that authority, say, 50% of citizens think that clarity of forms is very/fairly important, whilst only 30% are satisfied/very satisfied with the clarity of the forms. This would indicate there is a gap of 20% that think clarity of forms is important and yet are not satisfied. The surveys that the Department has carried out to date do not provide this kind of information which would allow authorities to target their resources more specifically where they are not meeting citizens' expectations. It would be useful to test the feasibility of developing gap analysis BVPI questions? It would also be useful to collect this kind of information on nationally representative surveys? A qualitative and desk-based analytical piece of research will be valuable to address these questions and help with the development of improved user satisfaction BVPIs.

9. Measuring satisfaction with community leadership and the new ethical framework

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

A feasibility study is needed to explore how overall satisfaction with community leadership and new ethical frameworks and standards might be measured in quantitative terms? These are complex and wide-ranging new functions for local authorities. Are deliberative opinion polling and citizens panels most appropriate in these circumstances? What are the strengths and limitations of these methods? What questions should be asked to reliably measure citizens' views on standards of local authorities' conduct/probity and community leadership that can then be used to establish a baseline of public opinion and repeated at intervals in nationally representative surveys. Outputs from this research will include: a review of the results from relevant questions asked in regular national surveys, such as the British Attitudes Survey and the People's Panel; guidance on the use of innovative approaches to testing community opinion on these specific issues; and, sets of questions that can be used by DETR and others in local and nationally representative surveys.

Democratic Renewal

10. Nature and extent of public participation

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

There is a need to revisit the research that De Montfort and Strathclyde Universities undertook for the Department on public participation in local government. The impact across local government of the consultation requirements of best value and a range of other policies and initiatives has not yet been established, and it is not clear whether the rapid rise in the use of innovative methods (found in 1998) has continued. Through an in-house study, in conjunction with the Unit's call-off contract for surveys of local authorities, the initial baseline data available from the previous research might be updated. Additional questions and more detailed case studies might also address the depth as well as the breadth of public participation.

11. Development of Overview and Scrutiny

Prior to the planned long term evaluation of new political management arrangements, a research study is required to consider issues around the development of the overview and scrutiny function within councils adopting new constitutions. Overview and scrutiny is a new function to local government and entails the development of new skills for members and places different demands upon officers. As well as consideration of the individuals involved, the study will need to consider how forward and backward looking review processes and policy formation can work effectively. Particular issues for consideration will be overview and scrutiny in relation to best value, partnership arrangements and within area arrangements. A small piece of qualitative research might seek to establish good practice in developing this function and related arrangements, in particular, the replicability of 'successful' local approaches. This will also have read across to the overview and scrutiny functions to be performed by regional chambers.

12. Factors affecting the willingness to stand for office

Building upon a recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation review, a research study is needed to consider, in some detail, the factors influencing people to stand for office in local elections. Why, for example, are some sections of society traditionally less willing to stand – some of whom may be politically active in other ways within the authority? A particular focus of this study will be women, who often have little interest in, or find there are too many difficulties presented by, standing as a councillor. The study will involve an in-depth consideration of the issues within a small number of individual local authorities, and will explore the views of the public, councillors and officers, and will also reflect upon issues of representativeness across local government in the light of new political management arrangements.

Ethical Considerations

13. Nature of misconduct allegations in local authorities

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

Although a recent INLOGOV, University of Birmingham survey for DETR has gathered information on the number of allegations of misconduct in local authorities, relatively little information was supplied by respondents on the nature of these cases. Such data would provide an informed basis from which to develop judgements about the degree of seriousness of allegations that might be presented to the Standards Board and would assist the design of effective filtering and prioritising processes for Ethical Standards Officers. Gathering such additional data could be undertaken through a short telephone interview to the monitoring officer in each of the 56 local authorities who received misconduct allegations in the twelve months prior to August 2000.

14. Number and nature of misconduct allegations in parish/town councils

The nature and number of cases arising from parish councils is unknown. There are some 8,000 parish and town councils in England, involving some 90,000 councillors (compared with approximately 20,000 district and county councillors). The purpose of this study will be to arrive at some estimate of the likely nature and level of allegations from this source. As with the research above, gathering these data could also be undertaken through a short telephone or postal survey.

15. Standards of conduct, public opinion and the role of media coverage

Linked to paragraph 9 above, negative local and national press reports relating to the small numbers of cases of ethical or financial indiscretions by local authority members or officers may do much to damage public perceptions of local government. In a longer term piece of research, detailed qualitative case-studies might be undertaken to investigate public perceptions of local government. Of particular interest will be impact of the introduction of the new ethical framework: will the framework, and reporting of it, provide the public with greater confidence and assurance concerning the behaviour of local representatives and council staff? Could it also have the perverse disincentive of dissuading people from standing for office because of the stringency of requirements, for example, declaring outside interests?

Innovation and Best Practice (including Beacon Councils)

16. Beacon Councils – thematic and general performance research

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

As in previous years, it will be necessary to provide joint research support with the IDeA to the Beacon Councils selection process through general performance and thematic research studies. 2001/02 will also see the emergence of initial findings from the evaluation of Beacon Councils being undertaken by Warwick University.

Community Leadership and Cross-Cutting Issues

17. Preliminary research on the use of the well-being power and other extensions of local government powers

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

Innovative actions on the part of local authorities have often been stifled by concerns over the scope of their powers, as have the possibilities of joint working with their partners. Considerable uncertainty has existed over enabling powers and, it is claimed, that this has led to an overly cautious approach. The introduction of the power of well-being and other planned extensions to local government powers under s16 of the Local Government Act 1999 are, in many ways, intended to reverse this mindset.

Preliminary baseline research is needed to: monitor the extent to which local authorities intend to use these powers; establish how far they see the well-being power as freeing them up to address the needs of their communities and to work in a more collaborative way with their partners, particularly on complex problems, such as neighbourhood renewal and reducing inequalities; and, to assess the extent to which perceived restrictions of the 'ultra vires' doctrine are potentially being transformed. Case-studies involving interviews with chief executives, leading members and senior officers in a sample of local authorities could investigate the extent to which these new powers are changing mindsets from a restrictive and cautious stance to a more enabling and wide-ranging approach. The research could also examine how this is being given practical application through the process of drawing up community strategies and the purposes for which new powers may be used, including interviews with partner and stakeholder organisations.

18. Preliminary lessons from Local Strategic Partnerships

The creation of local strategic partnerships (LSPs) requires recognition of the activities and contributions of other stakeholders. LSPs need to 'add-value' to existing organisational arrangements and other partnerships. Using a small number of case areas, there is potential for an organisational mapping exercise to be undertaken in order to identify the nature of governance relationships that exist at the local level. Further action research is needed on LSPs building on the lessons from the New Commitment to Regeneration. Areas could be chosen to look at how LSPs can be most effectively set up and implemented on the ground across the lifecycle of the partnership, what transferable lessons can be learnt and what long-term framework could be put in place to monitor and evaluate their impact. A particular issue is mechanisms for engaging effectively with community groups and representatives at the strategic level, especially members of ethnic minority groups and young people.

19. Local authorities as community leaders

In the longer-term, a review could be undertaken into the progress made by local authorities to join-up activities and operate within a wider community leadership role. The research could include two specific aspects:

- 'resource analysis' research from the perspective of both the local authority and the community could identify the resources and power mobilised to participate within local strategic partnerships. What constitutes good community leadership? What distinguishes areas where there are higher levels of willingness to participate by different groups? In what ways are groups facilitated (or hindered) to participate.
- similarly, there may also be merit in undertaking research into 'local authority capacity' to act as community leaders. Complementing the work by the IDeA on enhancing the capacity and competencies of local authority employees, additional research could identify the success with which local authorities have sought to develop staff in order to respond to a community leadership role. How do employees perceive the changes (and any success)? Do members of the community and other stakeholders perceive a difference?

20. Long-term evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships

In the long-term, Local Strategic Partnerships will need to be evaluated to assess the extent to which they have achieved their objectives. In particular, this evaluation will need to consider whether they have improved co-ordination of policies, programmes and service delivery amongst partners leading to better outcomes, particularly in relation to tackling cross-cutting issues such as social exclusion, sustainable development and economic development. In addition, the evaluation will need to assess whether they have simplified partnership structures and achieved the mainstreaming of benefits from working on cross-cutting areas of policy with partner organisations.

Electronic Government

21. National survey on the nature and extent of electronic service delivery

Given the rapidly changing environment, both in terms of public usage (growing at 10% a month) and local authority developments, there is a need for longitudinal survey research to track developments in electronic service delivery (ESD) across local government. Without duplicating the information collected through the annual SOCITM surveys, further questioning might establish the full nature and extent of electronic service delivery provided through the Internet, e-mails and other means. The research will consider the co-ordination and commitment to ESD within local authorities, in particular: gaps in ESD provision corporately and across services; the level of information provided and the scope for transactions, including priorities attached to 'electronic clients'; the level of usage from the public and other stakeholders (including who is excluded); and plans for development in the short and medium term.

Without duplicating the DETR Invest to Save Promoting Electronic Government project, a small number of local authority case studies might consider in more detail the implications of increased ESD for the organisation and management of both corporate and service departments. The research will consider inter alia: the resulting cultural changes from within the authority and in terms of the changing preferences of service users; the process by which Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) statements are drawn up; how far Best Value performance indicators reflect improved service through ESD; and the potential limitations of ESD, including a consideration of which services must remain in part at least non-electronic. Of particular interest will be the extent to which local authorities are able to use electronic means to support members and involve local people in council decisions. An element of this study may also specifically focus upon the usage and potential of ICT in terms of local authority procurement of goods and services.

22. Electronic voting

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

SOLACE, the LGA and IDEa have approached the Department for part-funding of a research project to consider issues around the implementation of electronic voting for national and local elections. A mixed research team including social research and technical expertise will be commissioned to undertake a nine month study reporting later this year. The research will identify potential barriers to the implementation of electronic voting (including cost, security, and public attitudes) and consider approaches to address them. Using critical path analysis a possible programme for implementation will be developed. The research is relevant to the PSA target of achieving 100% ESD capability by 2005.

23. Impact of new and emerging technologies on local government

A small, forward-looking study might consider the potential (and implications) of new and emerging technologies for local government, in particular, forms of ICT and their role in improving service delivery. New technologies such as digital TV, the Internet, WAP phones, self-help terminals etc might be reviewed purely in terms of their potential but also, where possible, through their application in other sectors. International experience of the use of such technologies as part of experiments in public participation in municipalities might provide some useful insights. The basis of such research might be a small number case studies in active local authorities (in the UK or overseas) or the private/voluntary sector. Beyond 'real' examples, this largely conceptual study might look to extrapolate current developments and emerging technologies to consider the implications for local government in 2005 and 2010.

Local Government Revenue Finance

24. Further research on fixed and variable costs

A scoping study being carried out for the Department by PriceWaterhouseCoopers into whether the assumption of a proportional relationship between changes in volume and changes in total costs is a reasonable approximation for local authority costs, in both the short and long-term, is likely to lead to the need for further research. The scoping study has examined the relationship from an econometric and an accountancy perspective, in order to consider both 'top-down' statistical analysis and 'bottom-up' modelling of costings. Further work will need to be commissioned once the recommendations of the scoping report have been fully considered.

25. Good practice guidance on the strategic approach to consultation on local authority expenditure

There exists a plethora of consultation guidance and mechanisms for consultation on various aspects of local government activities. Rather than rationalising the processes of consultation and linking them clearly to strategic decision-making and planning, some local authorities have introduced ad-hoc approaches for specialised decisions around financial planning, council tax increases, procurement decisions and options appraisal. Research published by the Department last year on public participation in local authority spending decisions yielded valuable lessons on some of the strengths and limitations of different techniques used, and briefly touched upon good practice. Further more detailed guidance, however, is needed to draw together key issues for a more strategic approach to consultation on local authority spending. Particular topics of interest include what factors or criteria do authorities use to decide whether and when to conduct a consultation exercise on financial planning, taxation and expenditure decisions; how, if at all, these are strategically co-ordinated; and, having decided upon a course of action, what judgements inform their decisions about which methods to use ranging from public meetings to deliberative opinion polling and referendums. Given the Local Government Association's planned work on this subject, the project will need to be undertaken in close collaboration with them.

26. Public attitudes to local expenditure and service diversity

Research could be undertaken on public attitudes towards significant local diversity in expenditure and outcomes from packages of discretionary and statutory services and cross-cutting functions across authorities i.e. to what extent, are citizens prepared to accept local differences in expenditure and outcomes from discretionary services in neighbouring authorities? This will also have read-across to work looking at the impact of regional devolution on differentiated policy responses, and the implications of them. Research could be carried out, firstly, to map, at a national level, the nature and extent of discretionary services that local authorities provide and patterns of expenditure on them. The results of the mapping exercise could then be triangulated with data on cost-effectiveness to see if there is a positive relationship between investing time and

effort in using discretionary powers and higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness. This could then be followed by case-studies into the ways in which effective councils balance packages of discretionary and statutory services, including detailed qualitative research on public attitudes towards them.

Capital Investment and Borrowing

27. CIPFA accounting code for a new prudential system

Expressions of interest are not required for this project

The proposed prudential system involves, inter alia, a significant shift away from statutory regulation to professional regulation, including placing the responsibility on CIPFA to develop and keep up to date the detail of the local prudential framework which will involve a new professional code. There may also be a need for some amendment to existing CIPFA codes. Although the target year for implementing the new system is 2004, CIPFA will need to begin work drafting a new code early in 2001 to enable Parliament and local government bodies to see how the regulatory part of the package fits with the proposed new legislation. It is hoped to have the draft Code available while the Bill is before Parliament. This work will be undertaken by a CIPFA representative working part-time within the Department.

28. Preparing for a new prudential system

Under proposals in the Local Government Finance Green Paper local authorities would no longer need to have government approval before borrowing to finance capital expenditure. On-going and long-term call-off research might usefully inform the development of the new prudential system of capital control and future arrangements for the provision of Government support for capital investment. It might also look at how local authorities can use the new system to maximise best value from their capital investment.

Taxes and Charges

29. Public knowledge and use of information on local authority expenditure

Every year, authorities issue statements of the breakdown of their annual expenditure with Council Tax bills. This information should be easily understood, accessible and transparent. It contains a mixture of data that is statutorily required to be presented and other data which authorities choose to include to further explain the basis of their expenditure plans. It is not clear how much of this information is clearly understood by and accessible to citizens, the extent to which there is demand for it to be made available in non-traditional paper-based ways e.g. through the Internet and other forms of ICT, what further efforts need to be made to clarify expenditure across the different tiers of authorities in rural areas and the extent to which citizens are making links between the various bits of information sent to them. For example, with information on Best Value Performance Plans being delivered by some authorities with Council Tax bills, it may be potentially useful to look at how read across is being interpreted by citizens. A small qualitative piece of research could investigate how citizens have understood and used this information, if at all, and how the links might be made more transparent.

30. Rate reliefs

The Government proposes to introduce new rate reliefs for small firms and businesses in rural areas. In the long-term, these will need to be monitored and evaluated to ensure they are properly targeted, deliver real benefit and do not place undue burdens on those who pay for them.

Regional Development Agencies

31. Measuring RDA delivery against targets

From April 2002, the RDAs will move to a fully flexible single integrated funding regime. This move towards Single Programme Funding has important implications for the ways in which RDA activities are managed and monitored. The removal of existing programme-specific reporting requirements will necessitate development of new harmonised output and outcome indicators against which to monitor and evaluate the performance of RDAs on delivering against their objectives. To inform this process, a research project is required to address three specific issues: (a) to advise about potential harmonised output and outcome indicators that might be set for the Single Programme; (b) to explore potential 'non-programme' indicators concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of RDAs, particularly those related to their strategic focus activities, and (c) to identify potential targets that might be set for these indicators, and the capacity to benchmark them across both space and time.

Regional Governance

32. The impact of regional policies on inter-regional concerns and national priorities

A consequence of the devolution of powers to the regions is the potential for variation in policy, as regions pursue priorities specific to their own needs. It is not yet apparent, however, what the consequences will be of this, both in terms of inter-regional aspects and in delivering national priorities. The creation of RDAs has focused attention upon inter-regional imbalances, yet evidence from ongoing research indicates that RDAs are not focusing upon the inter-regional spillover effects of their activities (nor are they required to). A research project could, in the first instance, provide an overview descriptive 'map' of strategies and policies being pursued within specific regions, and their interaction with those of other regions. Depending on the outcome, subsequent longer-term research, drawing on specific policy areas, could examine their 'collective impact' in terms of whether (a) appropriate policy responses are being developed to address inter-regional considerations, and (b) whether national priorities are being addressed. The research could also identify the (potential) mechanisms used by national governments to deal with policy variation that potentially threatens the pursuit of national objectives.

33. Measuring the flow of public funds into regions

The creation of the devolved administrations, and the development of RDAs and regional chambers in the English regions, has led to increasing emphasis upon the flow of resources from central government into individual regions. However, this scrutiny of the regional implications of policy and expenditure decisions has been done in the absence of reliable and comparable data, and the notions of regional 'share' are based largely on perceptions rather than any analysis of the evidence. Potentially building upon a pilot study undertaken for the Department in 1998 into the flow of public funds into local areas, there is a role for research to explore the feasibility and best method for measuring the flow of 'regionally relevant' public resources into regions. The research could apply this methodology to individual regions in order to provide preliminary conclusions about the absolute and relative flow of resources into regions. Dependent on the outcomes, subsequent research could also explore the extent to which the allocation of resources between regions is correlated with the *perception* of equity (across different stakeholders).

Regional Government

34. Regional identity, awareness of (and attitudes to) regions and support for regional government

There is a current manifesto commitment to allow people to decide in a referendum whether they want directly elected regional government. Making progress on the implementation of this commitment raises a number of practical issues, including methodological considerations and the extent to which (existing) survey evidence might indicate the likely result of any subsequent referenda.

Research could review existing attitudinal surveys into notions of regional identity, awareness of the roles and effectiveness of existing structures of regional governance, and levels of support for the introduction of elected regional government. In particular, this review could include an examination of the methodologies employed in, and the (reliability of the) findings that emerge from, the opinion surveys and referenda that have been undertaken within individual regions and districts. The project could also review existing methodological guidance on conducting referenda.

Subsequent research could identify further practical considerations for conducting regional government referenda, drawing upon overseas experience in part, in terms of: the form of questions asked; the outcome; the timing and management process and the implications of different results.

35. Membership of regional assemblies: review of potential structures

Any move towards the creation of elected regional assemblies raises questions concerning the potential structure of those assemblies, including those relating to their political management arrangements, the size and representativeness of assemblies, the method of selecting members, and the restrictions on eligibility of potential members. A research project could provide, in the first instance, an overview of the range of approaches adopted across the UK, and within Europe, in order to develop understanding of the options. Subsequent analysis could provide an analysis of the implications of (some of) these different models, and identify lessons concerning their introduction within England.

36. Voting arrangements for regional assemblies: review of options and implications

There exist a number of different voting arrangements through which members of regional assemblies within England could potentially be elected, each of which has implications for the election process and (perceptions of) the outcome. A research project could provide an overview of these different systems, drawing on published domestic and overseas experience, and the implications of each different model. Developing on from this, the research needs to provide an analysis of the options for any future elections within the English regions, and the implications that each of these may have.

Summary of Current and Recently Completed Projects

In 2000/01 the Local and Regional Government Research Programme consisted of 72 projects. There were 36 new projects and 36 on-going from the previous year. Brief details of a number of key projects undertaken within each of the key research themes of the programme are given below.

A particular issue for last year's research programme was the need to put in place a long-term programme of policy evaluation. In response to the commitment within the Modernising Government White Paper that all policies and programmes are clearly specified and evaluated and the emphasis on targets (PSAs) and indicators of outcomes, last year's research programme saw the development of a 5-10 year policy evaluation programme. The first of these – the evaluation of the Beacon Councils initiative started in June 2000. The second – the long-term evaluation of Best Value – started in January 2001, part of which will involve a preliminary feasibility study into the methodology for evaluating the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA) as a whole. A seminar for officials within DETR on the envisaged remit of, and approach to, evaluation of the LGMA was held in September 2000 and similar discussions took place in the mid-year review meetings on local government and local government finance research – see News below.

Other evaluations to be set up in 2001 and beyond include those relating to: Regional Development Agencies, the power of well-being, new political management arrangements, the ethical framework, evaluation of asset management plans and capital strategies and analytical frameworks for reformed systems of revenue and capital finance.

Best Value and Service Delivery

Evaluation of the Best Value Pilot programme
Contractor: Local Government Centre, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick

This research evaluated the 41 initiatives, involving 42 local authorities designed to pilot Best Value principles in advance of the introduction of a statutory Best Value regime. The pilot programme demonstrated that Best Value presented a formidable challenge, requiring significant changes in organisational processes and culture. The evidence collected through the pilot programme, however, suggested that the Best Value framework does have the potential to drive service improvement.

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Guidance for Potential Contractors

This section gives general guidance on the way contractors are selected for research projects.

Expressions of Interest

Expressions of interest are very welcome, but they do not guarantee inclusion on the shortlist for invitation to tender. The information that contractors provide on the enclosed form will be used in drawing up a shortlist, usually of between 3-6 names depending on the nature of the project and extent of expertise amongst potential contractors. Projects included in the newsletter form the basis of work for the coming year. Inevitably, however, there are changes to the announced programme during that time. Policy priorities may change, generating new information requirements, or projects originally suggested may no longer be needed or may require modification. The programme is sufficiently flexible to allow for this. The enclosed organisational details form asks for information about the expertise and experience of potential tenderers which will, in part, allow us to develop shortlists for any extra mural projects.

Invitations to Tender

Formal invitations to tender will include:

- the specification of the project outlining the objectives, relevant details and what contractors are expected to provide in the tender;
- the standard contract conditions;
- the date for receipt of tenders;
- the expected timing for the announcement of the award.

Three weeks is the usual period for submitting tenders, although for urgent projects that period may be shortened.

Tender Documents and their Assessments

A tender assessment panel will examine the tenders. The panel will look at the appropriateness, quality and cost of contractors' proposals, and they will take into account:

- understanding of the issues being addressed;
- familiarity with previous relevant research
- the experience of the research team
- the proposed costs.

Interviews may be held to assist with this assessment. Normally these will involve the tenderer making a short presentation and discussing the proposals more fully, including responding to the questions of the interviewing panel.

Awarding Contracts

The assessment of tenders normally results in the selection of a preferred tender, although the Department is not bound to accept any tender. All tenderers are informed of the outcome. The successful tenderer then agrees a programme of work with the Department for inclusion in the formal contract.

Evaluation System

An evaluation system has been designed in consultation with previously-used contractors and the Programme's policy customers. There is an internal procedure to evaluate all contracts within the Local and Regional Government Research Programme on completion.

The purpose of the evaluation system is to improve the workings of the programme, by informing future research and enabling the process to run more smoothly and effectively in future. It will also enable contractors to be provided with comments from the Department on their satisfaction with both the management of the research and the quality of the outputs and will give contractors the opportunity to offer feedback to the Department.

Long Term Evaluation of Best Value and Its Impact

Contractor: Cardiff Business School and partners

Starting in early 2001, this will be an objective, rigorous and robust evaluation of the success of local authorities' approaches to Best Value; and identify Best Value's impact, both in terms of its aims and objectives and as a key component of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA). It includes a feasibility study on a research framework to enable the long-term process and impact evaluation of all components of the LGMA.

Issue-based and progress reports throughout the study. Final report in early 2006.

Exploring the Measurement of Local Government Cost-Effectiveness

Contractor: The National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)

The research aims to develop and evaluate methodologies (such as frontier analysis) for measuring relative and absolute cost effectiveness of local authorities. The research uses the BVPIs as the main data source and aims to take into consideration the environmental factors that have an effect on cost but are outside the local authorities' control.

To be completed by Sep-Dec 2001

Work-life balance: survey of local authorities

In-house project

This report looks at the arrangements operated by English local authorities promote the work-life balance of their employees, and the extent to which local authorities seek to provide public services in a flexible way. The findings reveal that local authorities, as employers, are leading the agenda in terms of more flexible working practices. The provision of flexible services and facilities is more limited but the benefits offered by new technologies, for example the use of e-mail/the Internet are being embraced by most authorities.

Report published in March 2001.

Local Government Procurement and Commissioning

In-house project

This programme of research has been conducted to support the joint DETR/LGA Review of local government procurement and commissioning. A literature review, drawing on information from central government, other public sector organisations and agencies, the private sector and examples of overseas experience, has considered procurement practice, areas in need of improvement and characteristics of good practice. A postal survey of English local authorities and a small number of case studies in LAs and purchasing consortia have established baseline information of current practice and approaches in relation to local government procurement.

Report to be published Summer 2001.

Promoting electronic government

Contractor: CDW & Associates Ltd.

This two year project running from April 2000 to end March 2002 is a DETR/Invest to Save project. Local authorities are required to meet the Prime Minister's target for all services to be delivered electronically by 2005. The PEG project aims to help authorities achieve this through producing a set of guidance and assessment criteria specifically targeted at developing e-service capability. Aimed at both service managers and IT professionals it will provide practical advice and guidance for: planning implementation, taking account of best value and the principles of business planning; assessing progress towards full competence in e-government; and, specific guidance on procurement and partnership development in the context of cross-service working. A prospectus setting out more detail about the project and a web-site – <http://www.peg.org.uk> are amongst the first outputs.

Published in January 2001

Democratic Renewal

New Council Constitutions: Modular Constitutions for English Local Authorities

Contractor: Inlogov, University of Birmingham and partners

Modular constitutions for English Local Authorities accompany other guidance from the Department aimed at assisting local authorities as they change to one of the four broad categories of constitution under the Local Government Act 2000. The document presents a wide diversity of possible options and variations and will allow any local authority to take modules and put together a complete constitution reflecting their requirements.

Published in December 2000.

New Council Constitutions: Consultation Guidelines for English Local Authorities

Contractor: Inlogov, University of Birmingham and Professor Stoker, University of Manchester

Informed by research, guidelines have been developed for local authorities on the consultation required, under the Local Government Act 2000, before drawing up proposals for a new constitution. The guidelines explain how, through careful design, a package of both qualitative and quantitative techniques can be assembled to ensure this consultation process is comprehensive and inclusive, open and fair.

Published in October 2000.

Political Executives and the New Ethical Framework

Contractor: Inlogov, University of Birmingham

Through consideration of a small number of local authorities, this jointly funded research (with the IDeA) considered linkages made between simulated executive political management structures and ethical arrangements prior to the new ethical framework. The research found two interpretations of the new ethical framework in local government: one focussed on the adoption of the code and the behaviour of individual members the other on risk assessment and prevention rather than cure.

Report published by the IDeA February 2001.

Innovation and Best Practice

Evaluation of the Beacons Councils initiative

Contractor: Warwick Business School

LRGRU is part-funding this study, with the IdeA, to evaluate the Beacon Council Scheme's effectiveness in disseminating good practice lessons. The research aims to establish why some authorities participate in the Scheme and learning events, whilst others do not. It includes a feasibility study on the long-term evaluation of the Beacons Scheme.

Issue-based reports throughout the study. Final report in early 2002.

Beacon Council Scheme: Year 2 themes

Contractor: various contractors across the eleven themes

The second year of this scheme covered themes as diverse as tackling drug misuse to regenerating local areas through culture, sport and tourism. Researchers were commissioned for each of the eleven themes to provide the Advisory Panel with a grounded and empirical view of the issues faced in relation to each of the service areas and evidence they should look for in identifying good practice. The researchers produced eleven individual thematic reports and an overarching summary. As part of assessing general performance amongst beacon status applicants, MORI were also commissioned to establish baseline levels of public satisfaction for seven aspects of local authorities' general performance, and in relation to the eleven specific themes. They also identified the criteria that need to be considered in assessing a local authority's approach to establishing levels of satisfaction amongst its citizens with its service delivery.

Published in February 2001

Innovation and Best Practice in Local Government

Contractor: Inlogov, University of Birmingham

The main objective of the research was to identify the conditions that give rise to successful innovation in local authorities, and to explore how best these might be sustained and replicated more widely. A Good Practice Guide accompanies the main report offering a useful diagnostic tool for local authorities that they can use to establish, monitor and evaluate their capacity to change.

Report published in June 2000

Community Leadership and Well-Being

Law relating to the functions of local government

Contractor: 40, Kings Street Chambers and the Faculty of Law, University of Birmingham

This research was undertaken to help inform thinking around the Government's of establishing a new power for promoting the economic, social and environmental well-being of the local authority area, and in the enabling legislation for greater freedoms and flexibilities for local government. It involved a desk-based review of the current state of the statute book, recent case-law and legal advice as it affects the legislative framework surrounding local government, a survey of mainly legal staff in local authorities and eight case-studies on topic known to be areas where there was potentially uncertainty over the 'vires' of authorities actions including charging, trading, companies and trusts etc.

Published in November 2000

Review of Local Authority Statutory and Non-Statutory Service and Policy Planning Requirements

In-house project

This research provides a comprehensive review of the current planning requirements for (existing and proposed) service and policy plans. The project involves an in-depth documentary review of the planning guidance and legislation accompanied by interviews across central government. Building on this, the project assesses the scope for streamlining the plans through a series of local authority case studies, drawing out innovative lessons from the local level.

Report to be published in Summer 2001.

Local Government Finance

Business Perceptions of Local Government and Local Government Involvement with the business Community

Contractor: York Consulting Ltd

Based on a survey of Local Authorities, a survey of businesses and case study work, the research looks at current links that local authorities have with businesses, businesses attitudes towards local government and best practice on managing and encouraging a better relation between local authorities and the business community.

Published in June 2000

Evaluation of the Capital Challenge Pilot Scheme

Contractor: York Consulting Ltd

This evaluation of the Capital Challenge Pilot Scheme – a challenge fund process applied to the distribution of Government support for capital expenditure – will consider: individual local authorities performance in relation to the key objectives of the Scheme; assess the operation of the Scheme as a whole – including the administration by Government Offices; and, draw out lessons for central and local government in terms of emerging policies.

Report to be published in Spring 2001

A catalogue of data of potential use in determining revenue grant distribution

Contractor: Professor Brian Robson, Department of Geography, University of Manchester

The catalogue provides a detailed listing and description of currently available data that could potentially be of use in determining revenue grant distribution in England. It also identifies the strengths and limitations of these data for this purpose, focusing on statistical rather than policy aspects. The catalogue was commissioned as a supporting piece of research for the Review of the Revenue Grant Distribution System.

Published in January 2001

An evaluation of the process by which asset management plans and corporate capital strategies are developed and implemented

Contractor: York Consulting Ltd

This long-term project will review and evaluate local authority implementation of the Government's policies on capital and asset management. The study begins at a stage when local authorities are initiating a process of fully developing their Asset Management Plans and Capital Strategies in line with guidance from the Department. Consideration within this project will, therefore, shift from reporting on developing processes to full evaluation of the outcomes and impacts of the policy in relation to both core and lower level objectives.

Issue-based and progress reports throughout the study.

Final report in 2004.

Overarching Governance Issues

Process Evaluation of the Negotiation of Local PSAs

Contractor: Office for Public Management

This will describe and evaluate the process by which 20 local authorities have been piloting negotiations with Government Departments about freedoms and flexibilities in return for stretching targets and rewards for success. The research is particularly focused on providing lessons for the development of a rolled out Scheme and includes a feasibility study on evaluating the long-term impact of Local PSAs.

Report to be published in Spring 2001

Regional Governance

Regional Government in England: a review of literature and research findings

In-house project

This reports reviews the contribution of both domestic and international research evidence, and commentary, to the debate surrounding the development of regional government in England. It focuses on the potential form and remit of English regional government, and on the implications and rationale for its development.

Published in October 2000

Evaluation of RDA strategies and action plans

Contractor: University of Dundee, Ove Arup and Aston University with partners

This research has evaluated the form and content of the Regional Strategies and Action Plans prepared by the RDAs. Drawing on interviews and focus groups within each region, there were two specific objectives: an evaluation of the rigour and appropriateness of the proposals from an intra-regional and inter-regional perspective, and the identification of best practice and transferable lessons for RDAs.

Final report due late-Spring 2001.

Review of RDA performance and monitoring frameworks

Contractor: Segal Quince Wicksteed with Oxford Economic Forecasting

This aim of this research was to review the interim performance monitoring and evaluation framework established for RDAs. Specifically, it sought to: identify improved core State of the Region indicators; review the extent to which RDAs are able to provide accurate estimates for their activity indicators and develop monitoring and evaluation guidance for RDAs.

Report and guidance to be published late-Spring 2001

News

Local and Regional Government Research Programme Mid-year Consultative Meetings

As part of the research planning cycle, the Local and Regional Government Research Unit held its annual mid-year consultative discussions with key local and regional government policy makers, practitioners and researchers. The three sessions covered local and regional government and governance issues – ranging from service delivery and political management to community planning, local government finance, RDA regional strategies and regional allocations. The events were held in a round-table format and were chaired by Andrew Whetnall, Director for Local Government, Mark Lambirth, Director for Local Government Finance and Richard Allan, Director for Regional Policy and Regeneration.

The main purpose of the events was to consider the potential challenges and opportunities facing local and regional government and governance in the years ahead. Through this, it was hoped ideas for more forward-looking, prospective research might be developed that look beyond the confines of existing mechanisms and structures and consider potential new forms of management, spending regimes and public involvement. Other purposes were to identify gaps across the main research programmes and from this establish priorities for research to be undertaken within the Local and Regional Government research programme, or the research programmes of other participant research funders. Lastly, the meetings provided an opportunity for those present to reflect upon the Unit's plans for policy evaluation of the local government modernisation agenda, in terms of the timing, structure and coverage of these projects.

The ideas generated through these consultative meetings have been used by the Department to develop and prioritise potential research projects for this year. The reports from these events are available on the Local and Regional Government Research Unit's website:

<http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/rsrhprog/htm>

There will be mid-year consultative meetings for the 2002/03 Local and Regional Government Research Programme. Attendance will be by invitation.

Links with the research community

The Unit aims to develop and maintain links with the local and regional government/governance research community. It does this in a number of ways.

First, by encouraging dialogue through the mid-year consultative events, an annual series of lunchtime seminars and the website, which generates requests for information and help with research from within the UK and abroad.

Second, the unit seeks to develop links with all of the main local government representative and regional organisations, including the Local Government Association, the Improvement and Development Agency and LARIA – the Local Authorities Research and Intelligence Association. Members of the unit also maintain close links with the other major funding bodies, such as the Economic and Social Research Council and Joseph Rowntree Foundation – Paul McCafferty is on the Advisory Group for the ESRC's five year research programme on Democracy and Participation and was

on the Commissioning Panel and Wendy Russell Barter is on the Commissioning Panel for the ESRC's large-scale research programme on Devolution and Constitutional Change. Several members of the unit are members of the Social Research Association and all are part of the Government Social Research network, where strong links are forged with research colleagues in other government departments on areas of common interest.

Third, through joint funding and management of research projects. Current examples include youth participation in local government where two studies examining the nature, extent and effectiveness of local authority schemes and the detailed qualitative views of young people are being managed jointly and disseminated with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and research on the Beacons Councils scheme which is jointly funded with the IDeA.

Lastly, on some key issues, the unit has set up a research network to facilitate exchange of views and learning. The first of these is the Best Value Research Network which involves all relevant government researchers with an interest in best value plus the LGA, IDeA and Audit Commission. Three meetings of the network have been held so far.

The Local and Regional Government Research Unit

Details about all current staff within the unit and the work they are responsible for can be found at the website address:

<http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/index.htm>

Recent changes in staff and responsibilities, however, are the introduction of two new senior research officers – Adrian Leigh and Matt Carter – and the departure of Natalia Chivite-Matthews. Adrian and Matt have joined us from the Home Office and Natalia has left to join the Home Office. Maqbool Ahmed has also replaced Deborah Kafka as the Unit's administrative officer.

The unit has now taken on responsibility for research into a range of physical regeneration initiatives, including evaluation and monitoring of Enterprise Zones, regeneration in former Coalfield areas, Urban Regeneration Companies, Millennium Communities and evaluation and monitoring of regeneration on the Greenwich Peninsula.

WEBSITE DETAILS OF SOME OTHER RELEVANT GOVERNMENT RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

Department for Environment Transport and Regions (DETR):

- <http://www.housing.detr.gov.uk/research/index.htm> (Housing)
- <http://www.planning.detr.gov.uk/prp/index.htm> (Planning)
- <http://www.detr.gov.uk/itwp/consult/research/index.htm> (Integrated Transport research strategy)
- <http://www.roads.detr.gov.uk/roadnetwork/> (Roads and Local Transport research programme)
- <http://www.wildlife-countryside.detr.gov.uk/resprog> (Countryside research programme)

Department for Education and Employment (DfEE):

- www.dfee.gov.uk/research/programme.htm

Department of Health (DoH):

- <http://www.doh.gov.uk/research/rd2/prpindex.htm>

Department of Social Security (DSS):

- www.dss.gov.uk/asd/asd5/resprog00.html

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI):

- www.dti.gov.uk/er/emar/future.htm

Home Office (HO):

- www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/resprog1.html

Scottish Executive:

- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/>

Local and Regional Government Research Programme Publications

Full details of all the Unit's publications appear on the Department's website at

<http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/rsrhpubs.htm>

The list below includes details of all reports published since 1998.

DELIVERY AND QUALITY OF LOCAL SERVICES

Improving local public services: final evaluation of the Best Value Pilot Programme. S. Martin et al., DETR, 2001. (Full report available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/bestvalu.htm>)

Best Value and Audit Commission Performance Indicators for 2000/2001 Volume I – User Satisfaction Performance Indicators: Guidance on Methods of Data Collection. DETR, 2000 (Available at <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/bestvalu.htm>)

Balancing Creative Tensions: Better Practice in Implementing Best Value. M. Allison and J. Hartley, Local Government Centre, University of Warwick, and Vertex and Oracle, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available).

Generating and Sharing Better Practice. M. Allison and J. Hartley. Local Government Centre, University of Warwick, DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/bvdevel/index.htm>)

Mapping Partnerships in Eleven Local Authorities. Paper 8, DETR/Newchurch Partnership Series. DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/bestvalue/partnerships/partnershipindex.htm>)

Local Authorities Partnerships and Best Value – An Overview of the First Year. Paper 7, DETR/Newchurch Partnership Series. DETR, 1999 (Available at: <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/bestvalue/partnerships/partnershipindex.htm>)

- DETR/Newchurch Partnership Series⁶:
- Paper 6 – Exchange of Good Practice Briefing: Partnership Initiation, Selecting Partners and Organisational Change.
- Paper 5 – Service Delivery Partnerships in English LAs: Survey Findings.
- Paper 4 – Summary Evaluation of Pilot Partnership Networks.
- Paper 3 – Baseline Evaluation of Pilot Partnership Networks.
- Paper 2 – LA Partnerships: A Review of Literature.
- Paper 1 – Partnership: A working definition.
- Best Value Performance Plans: Practice and Procedures – A review of early experiences within eight local authorities. W. Russell Barter, LRGRU, DETR, 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/bestvalue/performance/ppindex.htm>)
- Lessons Learnt from Intervention – The Literature Review. KPMG, DETR, 1999. (Full report³ available)
- Lessons Learnt from Intervention – The Case Studies. KPMG, DETR, 1999. (Full report³ and summary² available)
- Improving Local Public Services: Interim Evaluation of the Best Value Pilot Programme. Warwick Business School, DETR, 1999. (Full report³, summary² and Good Practice guidance² available).
- Organisation-wide approaches to Best Value. (Paper 10: Warwick Business School/DETR Best Value Series), Jean Hartley, Warwick Business School, DETR, 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/bestvalu.htm>)
- Achieving Best Value through Quality Management. (Paper 9: Warwick Business School/DETR Best Value Series), Mike Lewis, Warwick Business School, DETR 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/bestvalu.htm>)
- Achieving Best Value through Public Engagement. (Paper 8: Warwick Business School/DETR Best Value Series), Steve Martin, Warwick Business School, DETR 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/bestvalu.htm>)
- Achieving Best Value through Partnership. (Paper 7: Warwick Business School/DETR Best Value Series), Mike Geddes, Warwick Business School, DETR 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/bestvalu.htm>)
- Achieving Best Value Through Competition, Benchmarking and Performance Networks. (Paper 6: Warwick Business School/DETR Best Value Series) Tony Bovaird, Aston Business School, DETR 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/bestvalu.htm>)
- Achieving Best Value Through Performance Review. (Paper 5: Warwick Business School/DETR Best Value Series) Ian Sanderson, Leeds Metropolitan University, DETR 1999 (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/bestvalu.htm>)
- Local Authorities' Activity Under Section 137, Local Government Act 1972. York Consulting, DETR, 1998. (Full Report³ and summary² available).
- Local Councils' Use of Section 137: A financial review of parish and town councils in England and their discretion to spend under Section 137 of the Local Government Act. Aston Business School, DETR, 1998. (Full Report³ and summary² available).
- Local Authorities' Involvement in Companies: Good Practice Guide. Coopers & Lybrand, DETR 1997. (Full Report³ available)
- Local Authorities' Involvement in Companies: Findings of Research. Coopers & Lybrand, DETR, 1997. (Full Report³ and summary² available).

LOCAL DEMOCRACY

- Political executives and the new ethical framework. C. Skelcher and S. Snape, INLOGOV, University of Birmingham, IDeA, 2001. (Full report⁵ available).
- 1998 British Social Attitudes Survey: Secondary Data Analysis of the Local Government Module. N.I. Chivite-Matthews and J. Teal, DETR 2001. (Available at <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/rsrhpart.htm>)
- Revisiting Public Perceptions of Local Government: A Decade of Change. National Centre for Social Research, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available).

It Is Our Money Anyway...: Lessons Learnt From Giving The Public a Voice in Local Authority Spending Decisions. National Centre for Social Research, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available).

New Council Constitutions: Modular Constitutions for English Local Authorities. Inlogov, University of Birmingham, The Stationary Office 2000. (Full report¹ available and at: <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/ncc/modcon/modhtml/index.htm>).

New Council Constitutions: Consultation Guidelines for English Local Authorities. C. Copus and F. Taylor, INLOGOV, and G. Stoker, University of Manchester, The Stationary Office 2000. (Full report¹ available and at: <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/ncc/guidelines/01/index.htm>).

Turnout at Local Elections: Influences on levels of voter registration and electoral participation. Plymouth University and Maxwell Stamp PLC, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available at <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/turnout/index.htm>)

New Forms of Political Management: Self evaluation toolkit. S. Snape, Inlogov, University of Birmingham, IDEa, 2000. (Full report⁵ available).

New Forms of Political Management. INLOGOV, University of Birmingham and S. Leach, De Montfort University, IDEa, 2000. (Full report⁵ available).

The Impact of Releasing People for Council Duties. G. Courtenay and S. Finch (SCPR); N. Rao (Goldsmith's College); and K. Young (Queen Mary and Westfield College), DETR, 1998. (Full report³ and summary² available).

Modern Local Government: Guidance on Enhancing Public Participation. V. Lowndes, G. Stoker, L. Pratchett, D. Wilson, S. Leach, M. Wingfield, DETR, 1998. (Guidance document³ and summary² available at <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/epplg/index.htm>).

Enhancing Public Participation in Local Government. V. Lowndes, G. Stoker, L. Pratchett, D. Wilson, S. Leach, M. Wingfield, DETR, 1998. (Full report³ and summary² available).

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Work-Life Balance: A Survey of Local Authorities. D. Birch and D. Purdy, LRGRU, DETR, 2001. (Full report³ and summary² available and at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/manage.htm>)

Law Relating to Local Government. C. Crawford, S. Sauvain, A. Coulson, and M. Clarke. DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available).

Innovation and Best Practice in Local Government: A Good Practice Guide. INLOGOV, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available).

Innovation and Best Practice in Local Government: A Research Report. INLOGOV, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available).

Policy Action Team 17: Joining it up locally – The Evidence Base. W. Russell Barter with P. McCafferty and L. Woodhouse, LRGRU, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ available and at: <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/pat17/index.htm>)

Cross-cutting Issues in Public Policy and Public Service. School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham, DETR, 1999. (Full report³ and summary² available and at <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/cross/ccpps/index.htm>).

Cross-cutting Issues Affecting Local Government. University of the West of England, Bristol, and The Office for Public Management, DETR, 1999. (Full report²⁰ and summary²¹ available and at <http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/cross/report/index.htm>).

FINANCE

Scoping study on the implications of local authority fixed and variable costs for revenue grant distribution, PricewaterhouseCoopers, DETR, 2001. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/finance.htm>).

Local Government Grant Distribution – An International Comparative Study. PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2000. (Full report⁷ available).

A Catalogue of data relating to local government finance. B. Robson, DETR, 2000 (Full report available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/datacata/index.htm>)

Revenue Grant Distribution System: Research on Local Government Perspectives. ORC International, DETR, 2000. Available at <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/finance.htm>

Business Perceptions of Local Government and Local Government Involvement with the Business Community. York Consulting, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available).

Doing the Business: A Guide for Local Authorities on Engaging the Business Community. York Consulting, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ and summary² available).

Measuring Performance in the Management of Local Authority Property. DTZ Piedad Consulting, DETR, 1999 (Full report ³ and summary² available).

Measurement of Relative Need for Capital Expenditure. PricewaterhouseCoopers, DETR, 1999. (Full report³ and summary² available).

A Prudential Framework for Repaying Debt and Providing for the Replacement of Assets. PricewaterhouseCoopers, DETR, 1999. (Full report ³ and summary² available).

Prudential Indicators. PricewaterhouseCoopers, DETR, 1999. (Full report ³ and summary² available).

Banks' Attitudes to Local Authorities: A Business Survey. FB Consultancy, DETR/British Bankers' Association, 1998 (ISBN 1 874185 11 5). (Full report⁴ available).

Local Authorities Attitudes to Private Sector Funding. FB Consultancy, LGMB/DETR, 1998 (ISBN 0 7488 9331 8). (Full report available⁵).

Challenges to Local Authority Accounts. B. Walker and S. Delay, University of Birmingham and A. Marsh, University of Bristol, DETR, 1997. (Full report³ and summary² available).

Evaluation of the Experience of Authorities during the Capital Challenge Pilot Scheme Bidding Round. York Consulting Ltd, DETR, 1997. (Full report³ and summary² available).

REGIONAL

Regional Government in England: A preliminary review of literature and research findings. W. Russell Barter, DETR, 2000. (Full report³ available and at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/regngovn.htm>).

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The Beacon Council Scheme 2000/2001: A Handbook on Measurements of user satisfaction in Local Government Service Delivery. MORI, DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacon.htm>).

Beacon Councils year two themes research summary, DETR, 2000. (Available at: http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/bc_yr2.pdf).

Community Safety – Reducing and preventing vehicle crime, Beacons Preliminary Supporting Research. Crime Concern, DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/index.htm>).

Competitiveness & Enterprise – Better regulation of business to protect consumers and encourage enterprise. Beacons Preliminary Supporting Research. University of Birmingham. DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/index.htm>).

Education – Increasing the attainment of under-achieving groups. Beacons Preliminary Supporting Research. University of Newcastle, DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/index.htm>).

Health – Effective local strategies to tackle the wider causes of ill-health. Beacons Preliminary Supporting Research. University of Birmingham, DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/index.htm>).

- Making the Most of Culture, Sport and Tourism – Stimulating economic and social regeneration through culture, sport and tourism. Beacons Preliminary Supporting Research. University of Birmingham, DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/index.htm>).
- Modern Service Delivery – Good access to council services. Beacons Preliminary Supporting Research. University of Birmingham, DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/index.htm>).
- Older people – supporting independent living for older people. Beacons Preliminary Supporting Research. DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/index.htm>).
- Planning – Town centre regeneration. Beacons Preliminary Supporting Research. URBED, DETR, 2000. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacyr2/index.htm>).
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- Education: helping to raise standards by tackling school failure. Beacon Councils Preliminary Research Activity. Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice, Brunel University, DETR, 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacon.htm>).
- Housing: improving housing maintenance. Beacon Councils Preliminary Research Activity. INLOGOV, DETR, 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacon.htm>).
- Modernising Planning: streamlining planning decisions for business. Beacon Councils Preliminary Research Activity. Halcrow Fox, York Consulting with Boyer Planning, and the LRGRU, DETR, 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacon.htm>).
- Modern Service Delivery: improving housing & council tax benefit administration. Beacon Councils Preliminary Research Activity. Centre for Research in Social Policy – Loughborough University, DETR, 1999. (Available at <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacon.htm>).
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- Sustainable Development: dealing with waste. Beacon Councils Preliminary Research Activity. AEA Technology, DETR, 1999. (Available at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/beacon.htm>).

NOTES

¹ The Stationery Office/HMSO publications are available from (mail, telephone and fax orders only):

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Local and Regional Government Research Programme 2001/02



Organisational Details

This form can be downloaded at: <http://www.local.detr.gov.uk/research/rsrnews.htm>

We would be grateful if you could complete and return this form to help us build up a clearer profile of the expertise amongst potential tenderers for our research projects. You are encouraged to return it as you may otherwise miss the opportunity to be considered to undertake research projects for the Unit.

A single copy of this form should accompany expression of interest form(s).

Contact name:

Job title:

Name of organisation:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

MAIN AREAS OF EXPERTISE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

- Capital finance
- Revenue finance
- Taxes and charges

SERVICE DELIVERY

- Best Value
- Best Value Performance indicators
- Beacon Councils
- Electronic government
- Local PSAs
- Procurement

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

- RDAs
- Regional chambers
- Devolution/regional government
- Regional governance structures

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

- Stakeholder participation
- Political management structures

CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

- Community leadership/planning
- Partnership working

GENERAL

- European/international experience
- Preparation of guidance
- Public satisfaction measures
- Local government law
- Innovation, cultural and organisational change
- Ethical considerations

METHODOLOGY

- Large scale data manipulation
- Quantitative data analysis
- Qualitative techniques
- Design/facilitation of focus groups
- Design and use of case studies
- Survey design
- Survey fieldwork and analysis
- Policy evaluation techniques
- Data mapping/GIS
- Literature reviews



Please list any other relevant skills or subject expertise that may be of interest:

Have you undertaken research previously for the DETR (or its predecessors)?

If yes, please give the title of the project/s and dates undertaken below. *Please continue on separate sheet if necessary*



Send completed forms to:

Research Administrator, Local and Regional Government Research Unit
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Floor 5/D5, Eland House
Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU

OR
e-mail to: lg_research@detr.gsi.gov.uk

Date form completed:

Expression of Interest

Please complete one form per project (copy as required)

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Whilst responding does not guarantee inclusion within any tendering shortlist, you are advised to complete and return the form because you may otherwise miss the opportunity to be considered.

We would be very interested in receiving any supporting material you may have about you and/or your organisation.

Project Number:	Project Title:
------------------------	-----------------------



Contact name:

Job title:

Name of organisation:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

Please briefly outline the relevant experience and activities of your organisation, specifically related to the above project. You are asked to list details of specific projects overleaf.

Please provide details of your capability and expertise to undertake the above project
(e.g. methodological expertise, numbers of relevant staff etc):

Please provide details of recent relevant projects undertaken or in progress. Please give the title of the project, and details of the sponsoring organisation (with contact name and details).
Please continue on separate sheet if necessary.



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