

Responses to Local Government studies consultation 2008

In August we consulted on four all-Wales study proposals – Making the Connections (buildings management), Performance Measurement, Support for Carers and Governance Arrangements. We are grateful to those who took the time to respond and have now considered your comments.

Below is a summary of the outcome of the consultation.

Some respondents were concerned that, both the scope and timing of any work undertaken are considered carefully to maximise its value, to reflect local government's capacity to support such work, and to minimise any duplication with other regulatory activity, either ongoing or planned. We agree that these matters are important and will ensure that they are addressed when planning our work and developing individual studies.

Beyond these general comments there was no obvious consensus on the relative merits of the four prospective studies:

- A **Making the Connections** study focused on buildings management was generally thought likely to be of the greatest benefit to local government, partly because of its potential contribution to authorities' own work on asset management planning but also because it is seen to supplement the WAO's earlier work on fleet management. We are proceeding with this study and have started the development phase.
- There were mixed views about work around **Performance Measurement**, ranging from those who believe that an all-Wales study is not justified given the intensive work already underway to others who think that a review could usefully contribute to the review of the Wales Programme for Improvement. We take the points that the Assembly Government and the WLGA are currently finalising a new strategic business plan for Ffynnon and that authorities' arrangements for using the system to support performance management are continuing to develop. Consequently, we do not propose to undertake this study in 2009 but may return to it at a later date.
- Views were similarly mixed on the study of **Support for Carers**. Some respondents rated this as their preferred option whilst others thought that to undertake such a study at this time would be counter-productive given the Assembly Government's proposals for service reconfiguration in the health sector and other ongoing regulatory work across health and social care. We are also aware that, since opening the consultation, CSSIW has decided to undertake its own all-Wales review of carers' services. We have decided not to proceed with the study now but are very likely to return to it at a later date in consultation with CSSIW and other regulators.

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- Views on the relative merits of a study on **Governance Arrangements** were evenly balanced. The main concerns of those respondents who awarded the study a lower ranking were the potential for duplication with other work, notably that of the Welsh Assembly Government's Governance in Wales Team, and timing in the context of this year's elections and authorities' preparation of their Governance Statements in 2009. We are proceeding with this study and are working closely with the Governance in Wales Team to design a study focused on its citizen-focused principles. The study will identify governance areas that need strengthening and good practice; the Governance in Wales Team will then work with authorities to address the key issues that emerge from our work as well as considering any actions needed at a national policy level. The review will inform authorities' preparation of their annual statements and should help to identify any gaps in member support or training.