

The next stage in the development of Housing KLOEs

The Audit Commission's key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) are widely recognised as useful tools which have helped organisations' self-improvement and provided a clear perspective on the inspection process and our judgements.

We want to continue to make the KLOEs as relevant and user-friendly as possible. So we are making some changes.

The current Housing KLOE documents include both the key questions considered by inspectors to assess the services being delivered, and the descriptors of what we would expect to find in a 'fair' and an 'excellent' service. These were intended to help organisations understand how the quality of services is judged against the KLOEs.

Individual organisations should address the key questions from their own unique perspective and arrive at their own solutions. However, some organisations have used the descriptors as a checklist, and have interpreted them as prescriptive which could stifle innovation. So we are changing the presentation of the KLOEs to emphasise the questions and encourage housing organisations to find their own routes to providing excellent services.

We also hope that housing organisations will increasingly learn from others by investigating the notable practice part of our website and see how these innovations can be used to improve their own services. This information is updated regularly on the Audit Commission website at:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing/positivepractice.asp>

The changes in detail

Earlier this year the Inspectorate consulted on detailed changes to the service KLOEs dealing with:

- Allocations and Lettings; and
- Homelessness and Housing Needs.

Feedback on these has now been taken into account and a revised Homelessness KLOE will be published by the end of September. The revised KLOE will be used for inspections from February 2008.

Following responses to the consultation process, further work is being done on the Allocations and Lettings KLOE. When a revised version of the KLOE is published the inspectorate will ensure a period of at least four months before the new KLOE is applied on site.

If there are general queries about these changes - contact us by e-mailing: hi@audit-commission.gov.uk.

We also asked if questions relating to the cross-cutting themes of Access and customer care, Diversity and Value for money should be removed from the service specific KLOE documents. (The three cross-cutting themes are already the subject of generic KLOEs, which organisations can use independently of the service specific KLOEs.)

We have decided to retain the cross-cutting themes in the service specific KLOEs, and make a number of other significant changes.

- KLOEs which relate to linked services will be grouped; for example bringing together in one place all KLOEs relevant to landlord services.
- The documents will be restructured to re-emphasise that the descriptors (of 'fair' and 'excellent' services) are not intended to act as a checklist or to be prescriptive.
- The restructured KLOEs will include electronic links to web-based sites containing examples of notable practice and related guidance and service standards.

As a result of these changes, we believe the KLOEs will be an even more useful tool for improvement and self-evaluation, by requiring service providers to ask themselves searching questions while not focusing on the descriptors, which necessarily change over time as expectations and performance levels improve.

We have regrouped the KLOEs to help organisations looking at their own services (either as part of an inspection, or as part of an internal service review) and to focus on the key areas that matter to service users, key stakeholders and the Commission.

The grouping that will be reflected on the website is:

Landlord Services

(covering services provided by ALMOs; Housing Associations; and Local Authorities with stock)

- Stock Investment and Asset Management
- Tenancy and Estate Management
- Housing Income Management
- Resident Involvement
- Allocations and Lettings *(as appropriate)*

Local Authority Strategic Housing Role (including community wide housing services)

(relevant to all local housing authorities)

- Strategic Approach to Housing
- Homelessness and Housing Needs
- Private Sector Housing
- Allocations and Lettings *(as appropriate)*
- Supporting People *(as overseen by administering authorities)*

Specialist Functions

(as provided by ALMOs, Housing Associations and local housing authorities)

- Supported Housing
- Management of leasehold and shared ownership housing
- Management of Right to Buy and Right to Acquire schemes
- Housing Regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal

Cross-Cutting Areas

(applicable to all service areas)

- Access and Customer care
- Diversity
- Value for Money

What are the prospects for improvement?

(applicable to all service areas)

- Prospects for Improvement

Coming Next

Supporting People

The environment around Supporting People has changed significantly over the past few months and the KLOEs need to reflect this change. We will consult on a revised Supporting People KLOE document later in the year.

Future Reviews....

We will continue to consult the housing sector over specific changes to one or more of the KLOEs at six monthly intervals, but we are proposing that individuals and organisations should be able to contribute comments and suggestions on the content of ANY of our KLOEs, at ANY time throughout the year as well.

The 'rolling dialogue' will allow all stakeholders to contribute their thoughts and ideas at a time when they want to and this will influence the formal review cycle.

So if you have any thoughts or suggestions – let us know by e-mailing: hi@audit-commission.gov.uk, or contact us through the [Housing KLOE page](#) on the Audit Commission website.