



# Policy Digest

*Support, influence & representation*

July – Sept 2006

Issue No. 8

## Introduction

This Policy Digest provides a review of Northern Housing Consortium policy and an update on recent national legislative, policy and regulation issues that have an impact on our members in the North.

The digest is moving towards a more analytical and future focus. We welcome any comments from members on the new format.

## Further information

Visit our website:  
<http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk>

or contact the NHC Policy section for further information on the work of the Consortium featured in the Digest or any other policy areas you would like to highlight:

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## Contents

**Future NHC Conferences**  
**Page 2**

**NHC Conference Findings**  
**Page 3**

**Briefings and Reports**  
**Page 4**

**Current and Future Consultations**  
**Page 6**

**National Policy Developments**  
**Page 8**

**Regulation and Inspection News**  
**Page 13**

**Feedback questionnaire**  
**Page 16**

## **FUTURE NHC CONFERENCES**

### **Northern Futures Summit**

#### **Shaping our places, Shaping our communities**

**28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> November 2006, York Racecourse**

The North is being transformed; we see the creation of 21<sup>st</sup> century science cities, the emergence of the knowledge and entrepreneurial sectors as drivers for our economic revival, our market horizons are shifting back to global not just local. This is transformation on a grand scale and with it, our concept of communities, of places, of housing is moving forward.

The Northern Futures Summit will seek to address issues affecting communities in the North and others by exploring how our housing offer contributes and supports the changing economic circumstances and aspirations of the North. How can we shape more effective partnerships to maximise our resources and realise greater benefits for our communities. Exploring:

- What progress are we making in the North to reduce the economic output gap, how effective is our approach to delivering sustainable communities that support this economic drive
- The challenge for housing as a sector, how well do we understand the aspirations of citizens and their expectations of housing
- The challenge for social housing, what should the role of social housing be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

In addition delegates will be able to attend sessions on;

- How are city regions responding to the needs of housing
- Multi Area Agreements – a new approach to delivery?
- Buy to let & buy to investment – understanding the market drivers

### **Managing performance, quality and choice**

#### **The Performance Management Conference 2006**

**6<sup>th</sup> November 2006, York Racecourse**

Recent Government commissioned reports raise a key concern of many in the housing sector – how best to deliver performance excellence, often defined by national indicators, whilst still responding to local needs and crucially customer choice.

This conference takes a fresh look at this balancing act and examines the performance challenges faced by the sector and explores the latest tools and techniques to use information to improve services and develop a culture focussed on choice and excellence. Areas to be covered include:

- Knowledge and performance management in the era of strategic regulation
- Choice based lettings – latest government thinking, and practical tips to help set up a scheme and its effect on performance
- Systems Thinking one year on – an update from the organisations involved in last year's ODPM pilot into systems thinking

## **Annual Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Conference 4-5<sup>th</sup> December 2006, Majestic Hotel, Harrogate**

With the development of the Respect Agenda is the need to effectively balance enforcement with preventative action. In particular the focus is on partnership working to ensure the support is available to influence change in our communities. Is the housing sector ready for this challenge and do we have the resources to promote community cohesion? In particular this year's conference will seek to explore:

- The Government's latest thinking on tackling crime and anti-social behaviour
- Jan Luba's annual review – the legal update
- Neighbourhood Policing – how it works best
- Monitoring Respect – what does this mean for housing?
- ADHD and mental illness – establishing an appropriate way forward
- Partnership working – how to work more effectively with external agencies
- Tenancy Demotion – how they work and how to get one
- Witness Statements – the do's and don'ts of preparing an effective statement
- Domestic Violence – understanding the links with ASB legislation
- Family intervention – where to begin
- Disability Discrimination Act 2006 – what you should know
- Respect and Civil liberties – are we getting the balance right?

## **NHC CONFERENCE FINDINGS**

### **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Supporting People Conference**

Delegates at the Northern Housing Consortium's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Supporting People Conference held in September, shared their experiences and debated the lessons and future challenges with key speakers from Government, including Jane Everton and Domini Gunn, and with leading policy makers and practitioners. Delegates clearly felt that the Supporting People programme has been more complex and administrative than anyone imagined. But it was always meant to be a long term programme, and three years on we can see that support is now much more a mainstream issue. We have seen that there are many committed providers and commissioners delivering an effective model for other sections of public service through user involvement, prevention and innovation, cross boundary partnerships and strategic joint commissioning. Supporting People has grown up, and whilst the original vision and principles are still valid, there are many policy and delivery challenges ahead.

Putting service users at the centre, giving them control of their futures and shaping services around them was the recurring message of the conference. The Government sees procurement, partnerships and local area agreements as central to the delivery of consistent services, an area of concern highlighted by users in their response to consultation on the national strategy. Delivering on outcomes and demonstrating the benefits of Supporting People in delivering on bigger outcomes – respect, criminal justice, health and

sustainable communities – are also central to the future success of the programme.

The Northern Housing Consortium will be organising future events around Supporting People and is currently looking at setting up a Housing Health and Social Care network to support members in planning and delivering joined up services.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Housing Strategy Conference**

The Consortium's second Strategic Housing conference considered how the housing sector could contribute to the "place shaping" agenda emerging from the Lyons Report. The two day conference was very successful and delegates were impressed with the "focussed and relevant" speakers and range of topics under discussion. Amongst the highlights included Carol Sweetenham, Head of Housing; Communities, Strategy and Finance Division at DCLG offering delegates a chance to "shape the wet concrete of housing policy" in advance of the local government white paper due in the Autumn. Delegates also heard from Donald Hoodless, Board Member of the Housing Corporation, who updated the conference on the thinking behind the Corporation's Local Authority Protocols which are aimed at improving the relationship between the Housing Corporation and the local strategic housing role. Picking up the theme that outcomes were key; Donald commented "Effectively we are not looking at who does what but how it gets done".

The Consortium will be building on many of the themes raised at the event, particularly the place shaping agenda, supporting sub regional strategic processes and assisting our members make better use of their asset base and resources. The government's agenda of supporting social inclusion, creating confident and strong communities and improving the quality of living and place absolutely must take in the contributions and achievements of the housing sector, we welcome a dialogue with government on the role the sector can play, how we can do more to support this agenda if given the right tools and resources.

## **BRIEFINGS AND REPORTS**

**The Northern Housing Consortium has produced a number of briefings in recent months covering key social housing developments. These along with all our previous Briefings are available in full at:**

**<http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/briefreports.htm>**

### **Housing and Healthier Communities**

The link between housing and health is one that is well known; however, in this current climate of junk food, childhood obesity and coronary heart disease, today it seems to be more important than ever. Recent policy developments have stressed the need for all sectors of the community to play a part in improving the health of the nation. Social housing providers in particular are in a prime position being able to target both their tenants, who tend to suffer from poorer health, and the wider communities in which they operate.

This document provides case study examples of how social housing providers in England are playing a part in improving the health of their tenants and the general community. It focuses on the 'softer' side of health such as healthy eating, sport and exercise. The various case studies provide examples of what housing associations have been doing, covering initiatives from setting up a food co-operative to organising basketball coaching sessions for young people. It also shows how these schemes have not only contributed to the health agenda but have in some instances helped to tackle anti-social behaviour, improve social interaction in neighbourhoods and bring communities together. This publication is intended to provide social housing providers with ideas and inspiration for what they can do to better the health of their residents and the community at large.

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### **Housing Act 2004 Survey**

The Housing Act 2004 brought in various new powers for local authorities from selective licensing of landlords to empty dwelling management orders. The Northern Housing Consortium carried out research with its local authority members in June 2006 to find out how our members are approaching the implementation of this Act; how they are coping with their new powers and any concerns they have about implementation. The survey indicated possible service options the Consortium could provide for the benefit of its members in this area. The research suggests that, whilst members are supportive of the intentions of the Act and welcome the tools they can now develop to play a more strategic role in the private sector, they also raised concerns including staff and resource issues, contradictory and late guidance from government. A lot of our members indicated that a more prescriptive approach and clearer guidance by government could have eased the implementation of this Act and saved time in deciding acceptable fee levels, and the development of forms and notices.

Following the results of this survey the Consortium has approached those authorities who have indicated they may need support to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The Consortium is also embarking upon research to further examine the buy to let and buy to invest markets across the North and what the future of the private rented sector may hold. We have input in the private sector housing network set up by gone to assist in the roll out of the Act. The Consortium will also produce a best practice paper for its members to be informed by the series of technical Q&A documents currently being developed by LACORS. We also intend to carry out a survey of private landlords to identify their areas of concerns and will use the results of this work to produce a leaflet for them to clarify any misunderstandings they may have with the Act and its implications for them.

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### **International Learning**

Traditionally policy-makers in the UK have turned to North America for their inspiration in housing and urban planning policies, especially through ministers

like John Prescott and David Miliband. In August, the Centre for Cities produced a discussion paper considering the policy lessons that we can draw from our European neighbours as well as the US, which was featured on the BBC News Website. The Northern Housing Consortium is also keen to make comparisons between policy at home and abroad, and as part of our international learning, has begun some research into international housing policy for potential study tours. Taking Europe, North America and East Asia, as case studies for the research, we hope that they will provide us with creative and innovative policy lessons, which we can take back to the UK. If any members would like to share their knowledge or experience of international policy please contact us.

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### **Housing in 2016**

What will housing in the North look like in 2016? The Northern Housing Consortium is seeking to build upon its existing knowledge of trends, policy and key data projections and develop this into a picture of housing in the North in ten years time. This future focussed project will consider the four themes of Design, Financing, Tenure Split and Who Lives Where, and will be aimed at strategic thinkers across the housing sector, including members, regional and central government, funders and regulators.

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## **CURRENT AND FUTURE CONSULTATIONS**

### ▪ **Inquiry into Supply of Rented Housing**

The Northern Housing Consortiums has submitted a response to the Committee Inquiry into the Supply of Rented Housing. To summarise, the response argues that a significant amount of public funding is required to meet the need for rented housing, as evidence shows a significant demand for social housing and a widening market. We stress the importance of a balanced approach to the funding of shared ownership and recognition that social housing is not always the tenure of last resort, but vital for those unable to afford home ownership despite aspirations. In addition, the value for money of the contribution which social housing makes to other Government priorities cannot be underestimated. We highlight that geographical distributions of funding should be based on a sound analysis of the value that investment would bring to the North i.e. as well as tackling affordability the issues are market restructuring and sustainable neighbourhoods. The response also considers the opportunity for local authorities to become builders and managers of social housing, the impact of housing and council tax benefit, the role of the private rented sector and the planning system in the supply of rented housing.

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■ **Hills Review of the Future Role of Social Housing**

Many members will be engaged with the ongoing Hills Review into the future of social housing. Commissioned by Ruth Kelly to examine what role social housing may and should play in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Professor Hills is taking evidence from the sector and will report back to the Secretary of State by the end of the year.

The Consortium is very pleased to have been invited to submit evidence to this key Review as we feel it is vital that the particular issues and concerns of the North are represented. We are keen to hear from members as we develop our submission on any aspect of the Review, but to assist we have prepared the following key questions:

- Is there a need for social housing? If so, what is its purpose and who is it for? What are the aspirations of all our customers?
- Is social housing the right term? If not, what is?
- How can social housing allow for greater geographical and social mobility? Is the current system flexible enough to cope with people's changing aspirations? What needs to change?
- How can we design the product, the tenure and the service to remove the stigma attached to social housing? If 90% of people aspire to own, but not everyone can afford it, how can we make social housing an attractive choice?
- How can sustainable social housing and mixed communities be best funded?

To input into the Review, please send your comment Sarah Mtango, Policy Services Manager by 5<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

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■ **Revised Key Lines of Enquiry**

The Northern Housing Consortium has responded to the Audit Commissions consultation on the two revised key lines of enquiry - Tenancy and Estate Management and Diversity. The full response is available on our website.

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■ **Comprehensive Spending Review 2007**

The Northern Housing Consortium will be making it's submission to the Governments consultation on CSR, making the case for investment in the North. We will be holding a road show in each of the three Northern regions regarding the content of the submission. Details will be circulated shortly.

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## NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

- **Housing Corporation announces research into Community Land Trusts in partnership with the University of Salford**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June the Housing Corporation announced the commencement of a significant piece of research into the use of Community Land Trusts. The research is to be conducted by Bob Paterson of the University of Salford and is funded through the Housing Corporation's Innovation and Good Practice Programme.

CLTs allow ownership of land by the local community to provide affordable homes or other facilities to meet local priorities, and they do this without the need for a social housing grant. The research is intended to support the opinion that as they have existing community networks and ties, housing associations should be central to the successful creation of CLTs.

The NHC launched its Briefing Report entitled "Community Land Trusts – An option for affordable housing?" in August. It provides an introduction to the CLT model and how it can be used to provide affordable housing, particularly in the North of England.

Community Land Trusts are gaining an increasing amount of media and public attention most recently exemplified by the establishment of a Community Farm Land Trust in Shropshire. Fordhall Farm on the outskirts of Market Drayton is one of the UK's oldest organic farms however the owners were faced with an eviction order because the landowner was trying to sell off the land to private developers. The owners, brother and sister Ben and Charlotte Hollins, launched a community land initiative offering £50 shares to any one who wanted to buy a stake in the farmland; shareholders don't receive dividends but they do get voting rights. In this way, the land was purchased by a land trust and will be forever affordable to individuals, accessible to the community and managed in an environmentally sustainable way. There are over 7000 shareholders, some of them being of the celebrity variety including Sting, Prunella Scales and Prince Charles provided money from an auction!

- Read about the Fordhall Community Land Initiative at <http://www.fordhallfarm.com>
- For more information about the Housing Corporation and University of Salford work on CLTs <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.7807> or [http://www.communitylandtrust.salford.ac.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=51&Itemid=36](http://www.communitylandtrust.salford.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=51&Itemid=36)
- Read the Northern Housing Consortium's briefing on CLTs at <http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/reports/Briefing%20paper%20-%20CLT.pdf>

- **The future for private rented housing and the buy to let market**

In the summer Hometrack produced a paper providing an insight into the future demand for private rented housing. While the private rented sector remains a small part of the housing market it is growing in importance. The Hometrack report indicates that the potential future demand for private rented housing is set to grow due to demographic, social and economic factors. In-migration, people starting families later in life and high house prices all contribute to people choosing to rent. 69% of private renters cannot afford to access owner occupation and some 22% of private renters are in receipt of housing benefit. Hometrack's report suggests an increasing number of people are consciously choosing to rent privately, particularly households in their 20s to early 30s. Recently there has been concerns that the buy to let and buy to invest markets are causing problems with access to owner occupation and could possibly be storing up demand problems for the future. This report implies that this may not be the case if demand for private rented accommodation continues to increase. The NHC is beginning a piece of research looking into the BTL and BTI markets. Investing in property has seen a success of return compared to other investment routes however, the impact this is having on the housing market is one that has not yet been fully investigated. The NHC's research will look at the increasing impact of BTL and BTI markets within the housing arena and the impact of these markets on pressures, supply, demand, and house prices.

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- **Respect Standard for Housing Management**

The DCLG have launched the new Respect Standard for Housing Management. The NHC is pleased that the Government has taken on board recommendations our recommendations on the production of guidance for organisations. DCLG have launched the Standard alongside guidance for landlords and for the public. Guidance on the use, coverage, development and benefits of Good Neighbour Agreements seeks to promote positive neighbourhood behaviours.

Northern Housing Consortium members told us their concerns that there is recognition that other services in the public interest outside of social housing also need a similar standard. DCLG has made clear that it is the responsibility of all agencies to foster partnership approaches but that it is reasonable to expect landlords to be proactive in seeking to break down barriers but also right to acknowledge that full responsibility cannot rest with them. Additionally, to allay concerns, DCLG have broken down commitments into what the landlord can: do reasonably; do alone and what they can do in partnership. The Housing Corporation have also announced funding for new Innovation and Good Practice grants for five housing associations to become directly involved in new family intervention centres. The centres aim to show the potential for real partnerships at the front line.

We also argued that the standard would be made more meaningful if residents are empowered through involvement in the standard from the

beginning. DCLG have agreed with us that the need to communicate the commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour to residents is vital but feel that it is best for local dissemination methods to be used rather than central Government being overly prescriptive on what is required. Again the landlord and public guides that accompany the Standard outline the vital importance of resident involvement.

HouseMark is developing *ASB Activity Measures* designed to enable social landlords to benchmark core activities in tackling ASB and meeting the Respect Standard for Housing Management.

The Northern Housing Consortium runs an ASB practitioner network which provides support to members in delivering their responsibilities on ASB and Respect.

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- **Free Commune Experiments: lessons for policy in England**

The Free Commune Experiments (FCEs) were set up in Scandinavia in the late 1980s and early 1990s in response to the rising costs of the welfare state. Policy makers were seeking ways of devolving greater responsibility for policy making and service provision to the local level with the aim of securing more responsive and cost effective local services.

Selected, well performing, municipalities were granted exemptions from elements of national legislation in order to encourage bottom up development of new approaches that would provide exemplars and enable central government to decide what freedoms local areas needed on a permanent basis. The approach offered a low cost and initially temporary way of testing increased autonomy. The FCEs were given greater powers and control over spending decisions, simplification of planning and environmental rules, and were encouraged to use innovation and cross boundary service delivery to create efficiencies.

The FCEs helped to create a policy environment in which local authorities were able to experiment with new approaches resulting in innovation and efficiency. Services were better able to respond to local needs and priorities, offering increased choice and citizen participation. The local authorities were able to play a more pro-active role in policy making and a new culture of central-local government relations developed.

#### *Implications*

The links with English policy and the move towards a new localism through Local Area Agreements, more joined up service provision, greater choice and community empowerment are clear. There are also some key lessons.

The report considers the possibility of granting freedoms wider than those available through LAA's and LPSA's in order to stimulate more

innovation at a local level, coupled with the adoption of presumption in favour of granting exemptions unless there are compelling reasons for not doing so. This would be a major step forward as current policy places the onus on the local authority to justify and evidence the need for flexibilities, and in many cases this is proving very difficult. The approach would be a major step towards realising the Government's vision for public service delivery.

In its recent discussion paper "*From Decent Homes to Decent Communities*" DCLG propose to explore new freedoms and flexibilities for local authorities, ALMO's and housing associations to achieve priorities and create new models for delivering and managing social housing. In particular, DCLG will look at the costs and benefits of allowing excellent performing local authorities to operate outside the HRA subsidy system, and greater opportunities for successful ALMOs to play an effective role in driving up the quality of housing. Evidently restricting freedoms and flexibilities to excellent performing organisations is intended to act as an incentive and reward to drive up performance.

### **Your Views**

As part of our ongoing dialogue with members regarding freedoms and flexibilities, we would be interested in your views.

What conditions would you like to see placed upon organisations being offered greater freedoms and flexibilities?

Is it appropriate for freedoms and flexibilities to only be granted to excellent performers or is there an argument for granting freedoms to poor performers, to create better opportunities to improve performance and drive up standards more quickly?

The full report can be found at:

[http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/877/TheFreeCommunesExperimentslessonsforpolicyinEngland\\_id1500877.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/877/TheFreeCommunesExperimentslessonsforpolicyinEngland_id1500877.pdf)

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- **Social Exclusion of Older People: Future Trends and Policies Think Piece**

The University of Sheffield and National Centre for Social Research have examined how the landscape of social exclusion is likely to change over the next 5-15 years. The policy implications and options in seeking to combat social exclusion amongst older people will be used by the DCLG as part of its evidence base for future policy.

The report shows that 7% of people over the age of 50 (1.1 million) currently experience 'multiple exclusion' and those most at risk are likely

to live alone, have poor health or depression, limited mobility, live in rented accommodation, have low incomes. The population is ageing and we expect a growth in the number of very elderly and in particular women. Analysis of the two cohorts of baby boomers shows some evidence they may be more disconnected from their local communities and therefore could be at greater risk of isolation and depression. The impact of social exclusion may however be mitigated by higher levels of familiarity with technology and IT literacy.

We expect an increase in black and minority ethnic elders, and an increase in the proportions of childless elders and single households. Solid predictions on health are not possible; especially given current issues such as obesity, but through preventative health policies and advances in treatment we expect an increase in healthy and disability free life expectancy.

In the long term we expect a downward influence on income levels in retirement based on the Governments pension policy, the collapse of employers' pension schemes, increasing insecurity in the labour market and continued growth in part time employment. Owner occupation and housing wealth amongst older people is expected to remain high, and recent attitudinal research shows that even those without private pensions would be willing to release equity, enjoy life and not worry about leaving a bequest to their family.

Globalisation is expected to increase the 'hour glass' polarisation between high and low paid/skilled jobs. The hollowing out of intermediate jobs will mean more workers are trapped in low paid employment which will have a huge impact on incomes, physical and mental health in later life – key risk factors for social exclusion. On a positive note, the ageing of the workforce will increase demand to remain in employment, many employers will have age diversity policies and public policy will have reinforced positive attitudes to older workers.

There are clear **implications for members** in terms of planning for an ageing population and ensuring services are designed and delivered in a way which reduces social exclusion in later life.

The key challenges ahead include:-

- Adapting services to changing demography, ethnic diversity, household formation and to the changing needs and aspirations of older people
- Creating enabling internal environments e.g. using technology to reduce the impact of disability and enable participation
- Offering real choices, but also empowering and capacity building to enable older people to contribute and make informed choices
- Developing sustainable, inclusive and diverse communities and being particularly sensitive to the risk of exclusion amongst older people whose communities are changing around them e.g. increasing participation in neighbourhood renewal

- Working in partnership, with for example health and social care and Sure Start, to deliver consistent services which deliver positive outcomes for older people

- **Supporting People Health Pilots**

The Governments announcement last week of the key findings from the Supporting People Health Pilots highlighted a number of challenges in joint working between housing and health, including a lack of appreciation of the impact of housing related support and its relationship with wellbeing. Whilst there is a long way to go the pilot findings show a potential for agencies and professionals to work effectively across organisational boundaries, with clear leadership, agreed goals and dedicated partnerships.

The housing world has much to offer the health sector. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in user involvement, the choice agenda, needs and markets analysis and the delivery and measurement of outcomes. Housing also values the huge importance of integrating health and social care into the development of sustainable neighbourhoods and tackling inequalities. The Northern Housing Consortium already has many examples of its members delivering joined up services in the community. Both as commissioners and providers of strategically joined up Supporting People services, through the Department of Health's Partnership for Older People projects and the NHS Local Improvement Finance Trust schemes, DWP Link Age Plus pilots and extra care housing developments.

Members are very keen to forge even greater links with health and social care and the Northern Housing Consortium is helping them to do this through the development of an integrated housing, health and social care network - the Integrated Living Network. This network aims to bring together all those working to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people through the joint commissioning of services. The network will provide regional events, a discussion forum, promotion of good practice, and a range of support options. We will be working in partnership with the Care Services Improvement Partnership on a number of joint events in order to strengthen to the links and build dedicated partnerships with health and social care. To register interest in receiving further information about the Integrated Living Network please contact us.

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## REGULATION AND INSPECTION NEWS

- **Lighter touch regulation in exchange for surpluses**

It is reported that DCLG and the Housing Corporation are considering linking a reduction in the regulatory burden for housing associations to demands for associations to make better use of surpluses. As housing

associations have surpluses in excess of the £3.9bn NAHP for 2006/08, this would have clear implications on the future NAHP.

The sector has performed spectacularly well in response to the Gershon review and identified efficiencies well in excess of Government targets. Is the government now reducing its own commitment to investment by suggesting that efficiencies identified be used to fund future development?

All of this comes at a time of uncertainty on the future of social housing (the Hills' report is awaited) and the future roles of the Housing Corporation and the Audit Commission are also under discussion.

Should regulation and the use of assets become linked, the future freedoms and flexibilities for local authorities and ALMOs must also form part of the equation. If associations are to self-fund developments, will the same rules apply to other landlords?

Self-funded developments could create a more level playing field and avoid protracted and labour-intensive processes in bidding for funding. They could also allow smaller RSLs to have more of a role, though care would be needed to consider the strategic impact of developments.

We wait further information from DCLG to further examine how this will impact on the sector.

#### ■ **Changes to inspection**

The Audit Commission continues to consider more of a risk-based approach when determining where and how to inspect in the future. Issues such as triggers for inspection and short-term notice prior to inspection remain under discussion, but the Commission has a stated aim to target inspection "using a full risk analysis".

Peter Wilkinson, Managing Director of Resources at the Audit Commission highlighted the following as features of future regulation at the NHC Inspection 2006 conference

- More emphasis on voice of users & citizens
- Areas as well as institutions
- Actively promote equality & value diversity
- Focus on value for money
- Partnership working
- Targeted inspection, focused on potential failure
- More reliance on information
- Less on-the-ground inspection

The Audit Commission clearly sees area-based inspection as a future method of assessment. It captures many of the points on the bulleted list above and considers services how users receive them. Again to quote Peter Wilkinson: "We organise services through institutions, but people need them to be joined-up."

The Commission has prepared some groundwork on this. The website: <http://www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk> provides a useful insight and their paper on local quality of life indicators also works as a scene setter for how area based assessment may look: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/0D488A03-8C16-46fb-A454-7936FB5D5589/QofL2005.pdf>

**- Next Issue: January 2007**

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# POLICY DIGEST QUESTIONNAIRE

We have recently redesigned and reformatted the quarterly Policy Digest and would like to get some feedback from our readers on this. We would be very grateful if you could take your time to fill in this brief questionnaire and return it to us either by email or post. Thank you for your help.

**Q.1. How useful do you find the quarterly policy digest?**

- Very useful 1
- Somewhat useful 2
- Not useful 3

**Q.2. How would you rate this quarter’s digest in terms of content?**

- Very good 1
- Good 2
- Neither good nor poor 3
- Poor 4
- Very poor 5

**Q.3. How would you rate the appearance and layout of the digest?**

- Very good 1
- Good 2
- Neither good nor poor 3
- Poor 4
- Very poor 5

**Q.4. Do you think the issues covered in the policy digest are relevant and timely?**

- Yes 1
- No 2

**Q.5. Please use this space to add any other comments you may have regarding the quarterly policy digest and tell us what you think**

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