

HOUSING KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY (KLOE) GUIDANCE NOTES

General

Following the consultation exercise carried out late last year¹ the Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate is now in a position to roll out revisions to its methodology for inspecting housing services delivered by local authorities, arm's length management organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations. Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) are an important part of these revisions.

The Housing Inspectorate has been revising its inspection methods at the same time as the Audit Commission as a whole is reviewing its techniques for inspecting local authority services across all the services it is responsible for inspecting. The Housing Inspectorate will ensure its revised inspection methods are consistent with the inspection framework developed for the Commission as a whole.

Introduction to KLOEs

These guidance notes set the broad framework for the Housing Inspectorate's KLOEs to be used for the inspection of the housing services delivered by inspected bodies.

KLOEs represent sets of questions and statements around either service or judgement specific issues which provide consistent criteria for assessing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of housing services. These KLOEs are designed to provide inspectors, inspected bodies and others with a framework through which to view and assess services. Descriptors of excellent and fair services have also been provided that set out what we would expect of services delivered to such standards.

KLOEs will be used by inspectors to assist them in carrying out service level inspections and relevant improvement work in housing organisations. The Housing Inspectorate also envisages that the individual KLOEs will be useful to organisations such as:

- national bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Housing, the National Housing Federation and National Federation of ALMOs seeking to advise their members on service improvement issues, or
- consultants helping and working with housing organisations to improve their services.

KLOE development

The Housing Inspectorate's set of KLOEs will evolve over time as a result of practical experience with their use in the field, consultation with the bodies we inspect, discussions with national housing bodies and the input from the Audit Commission's broader inspection methodology review. In order to capture this learning we will undertake an early review of the KLOEs later this year. This will enable the Housing

¹ 'A framework for the review of housing inspection and assessment', Audit Commission, December 2003.

Inspectorate to take account of the views of the housing sector on the relevance and applicability of each of the KLOEs.

Accordingly we have set up a number of mechanisms to capture the thoughts and views of the sector including use of regional reference groups. Feedback on the KLOEs will be instrumental in making sure that the Housing Inspectorate’s published service criteria reflect the standards all parties want to see achieved in the housing sector.

The KLOE set

The KLOEs we have developed cover service specific areas within housing and deal with issues that need to be assessed in arriving at a score of excellent, good, fair or poor for judgements about the current service: ‘How good is the service?’ (also known as Judgement One). The KLOE set contains one other KLOE which covers the criteria around which the second inspection judgement of excellent, promising, uncertain or poor prospects is based on ‘What are the prospects for improvement?’ This follows a slightly different structure based around the three questions covering prospects for improvement (see below for details).

We are developing 13 KLOEs that will be used in inspections. These are as follows:

No.	KLOE Name	KLOE Type
1.	Prospects for Improvement	Generic KLOE used for all inspections
2.	Strategy and Enabling (LAs only)	Service specific
3.	Stock Investment/ Asset Management (inc. Repairs and Maintenance)	Service specific
4.	Housing Income Management	Service specific
5.	Resident Involvement (incorporating some of User Focus)	Service specific
6.	Tenancy and Estate management	Service specific
7.	Allocations and Lettings	Service specific
8.	Homelessness and Housing Needs (LAs primarily)	Service specific
9.	Private Sector Functions (LA only)	Service specific
10.	Supporting People	Service specific
11.	Supported Housing (including sheltered housing)	Service specific
12.	Leasehold Management, Shared Ownership and Right to Buy	Service specific
13.	Regeneration (HAs primarily)	Service specific

We may introduce other KLOEs over time as the nature and scope of our inspection activity develops.

Supporting these KLOEs are three further generic KLOEs that pull together issues around Access, Diversity and Value for Money. These will not be used independently for inspection purposes, as questions around these issues have been embedded within each of the service specific KLOEs. Because all of the service specific KLOEs cover Access, Diversity and Value for Money issues, we recognise that the KLOEs may appear repetitive. However, this approach ensures that the KLOEs can be used on a stand-alone basis for each relevant service area.

The three generic KLOEs will be published on our web-site as we hope that inspected bodies will find them useful as assessment tools when evaluating these issues in different service areas.

The basic structure of KLOEs

All KLOEs have the same structure. They cover the Key Lines of Enquiry and descriptors of what excellent and fair organisations look like in the particular service specific KLOE. Therefore all service specific KLOEs have the following headings:

Key lines of enquiry (KLOE)	An organisation that is providing excellent services	An organisation that is providing fair services
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The KLOE covering improvement prospects is broken down into the three main questions. These are:

- What is the evidence of service improvements?
- How good are the current improvement plans?
- Will improvements be delivered?

How the Housing Inspectorate will use KLOEs in inspections

The Housing Inspectorate will use the KLOEs by applying only those that are relevant to the scope of the inspection. The scope of an inspection will follow a performance and risk assessment of each organisation. Inspections will also use self assessment appraisals carried out and produced by inspected bodies to determine the scope of the inspection and the KLOEs to be used. The mechanisms and requirements of self assessment appraisals are also part of the revisions to our inspection methodology.

The questions that appear under each KLOE provide the overarching key questions that inspectors will be asking of the organisations that they inspect. Inspectors will look for answers to these questions by asking a series of more detailed questions and undertaking reality checks, specifically tailored for each inspected body, that will help inspectors arrive at robust assessments and judgements for the particular body being inspected. This tailored approach will take close account of the context in which inspected bodies deliver their services.

How the Housing Inspectorate envisages housing service providers will use KLOEs

The Housing Inspectorate envisages that housing organisations will use the KLOEs to prepare themselves and staff for the process of inspections. This is likely to take the form of both aiding organisations in preparing staff for the potential questions and issues inspectors are likely to want to discuss and understand during inspections and in completing self-assessment appraisals.

It is also hoped that the KLOEs will provide housing organisations with a set of tools to carry out in-depth service reviews outside of an inspection regime. Here we envisage that organisations will use the KLOEs as a framework to review and assess services and to develop improvement plans to drive forward customer orientated service improvements.


While the Housing Inspectorate has packaged some services together in producing the KLOEs there is no expectation that inspected bodies should organise and deliver services in a similar way. The Housing Inspectorate remains committed to supporting service structures that best meet the needs of service users and that focus on service delivery outcomes not processes and structures.

Your comments and where to get help


If you have any feedback about the KLOEs and where you think they can be improved, please contact Bill Flood at:

 b-flood@audit-commission.gov.uk;

or by writing to him at:

 Housing Inspectorate, Audit Commission, 1st floor, Millbank Tower,
Millbank, London, SW1P 4HQ.

Alternatively if you want to speak to him for advice or assistance in connection with the KLOEs please ring:

 07771-943 722.