

OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

SCIENCE REVIEW

OF THE OFFICE OF
THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
A REPORT FOR COMMUNITIES
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT





Foreword

by Sir David King, Government Chief Scientific Adviser



As the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, I have a functional responsibility for maintaining the quality and vigour of science in all Government departments. Accordingly an Office of Science and Innovation (OSI) team was established to take forward a rolling programme to review Government-funded science, including social science, with the broad aims of developing a corpus of information across Whitehall and to provide an external driver for improvement in the way departments obtain and use science.

This review of the management, quality and use of science in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is the fourth in the series.¹ The review was completed soon after ODPM's responsibilities were incorporated in Communities and Local Government (CLG) which was created in May 2006. The report is therefore being directed at Communities and Local Government which, following its establishment, has been implementing changes in its structures and processes to help it meet its current and future delivery challenges. In accordance with our aims, the review recognises examples of good practice but has also identified a number of areas in which CLG can continue its improvement in the use of science in its broadest sense. I am confident that it will act on the recommendations made here and accept them as a constructive contribution to the changes it has embarked on. Many of the findings and recommendations have a wider relevance and I urge other Government departments to consider them in the light of their own circumstances.

I am most grateful for the advice of the expert Steering Panel members (see page 53) who have been instrumental in focusing the work of the review on the key issues and in advising us, in particular during the detailed case studies and peer reviews on which much of the review is based. On behalf of the review team (OSI staff and our consultants from Momenta), I would also like to thank all our interviewees and correspondents, including many ODPM, ex-ODPM and CLG staff, for their help, openness and patience in providing us with detailed evidence for the review.

¹ Following reviews of the Department for Culture Media and Sport, the Health and Safety Executive and the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

We shape our buildings, then our buildings shape us.²

²Winston Churchill (1874-1965)



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The annexed material is available at:

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/science/science-in-govt/works/science-reviews/review/clg/page24794.html>

Annex 1	Peer Review Exercise
Annex 2	Case Study – Revision of Planning Policy Guidance
Annex 3	Case Study – Government’s Response to the Barker Review
Annex 4	Case Study – Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme
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Annex 6	External Stakeholder Consultation
Annex 7	Methodology for the Science Review of ODPM
Annex 8	Information on the Steering Panel



Summary

1. Review Terms of Reference

1. The Government's Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), Sir David King, has set up a rolling programme of reviews to assess the quality and use of science by Government departments.³ For the purposes of the reviews a broad definition of 'science' is used, which includes natural sciences, social science, economics and statistics – see Glossary.
2. The overall aims of the review programme are to:
 - a) **Maintain and improve the quality and use of science in government.**
 - b) **Review existing departmental systems** for assuring the quality, management and use of their science;
 - c) **Disseminate** examples of **good practice** from within the UK and abroad;
 - d) **Inform and support the Government's CSA** in his role of "advising the Prime Minister and the Cabinet on the overall health of science and scientific research funded by Government departments."
3. To formulate a view on the quality and use of science in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), the review focused on ten success criteria that underpin good practice in the use of science by Government departments (see Introduction), to identify both areas of good practice, especially those that could be adopted elsewhere, as well as areas for improvement.
4. ODPM was the fourth department to be reviewed under the programme, after the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
5. This report is addressed to ODPM's successor, Communities and Local Government.

³ The reviews build on the work of the Government's published strategy for science, engineering and technology, *Investing in Innovation, A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology*, July 2002. (http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr02/spend_sr02_science.cfm) and the *Cross-Cutting Review of Science and Research*, March 2002 (http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/3A7B0/science_crosscutter.pdf).

2. ODPM and ODPM Science

Strategic Aims

6. ODPM stated its core purpose as building sustainable communities through long-term investment under its two plans: Homes for All; and People, Places and Prosperity. It aimed to “provide many more people with more choices and fairness in housing” and to “work across the whole of Government to promote prosperity for all and help local people create Sustainable Communities they can feel proud of: places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.”

7. ODPM’s aim of delivering sustainable communities was translated into the following five strategic priorities:

- a) Delivering a better balance between housing supply and demand
- b) Ensuring people had decent places to live
- c) Tackling disadvantage
- d) Developing better public services
- e) Promoting the development of the English regions.

Science Spend

8. To support the delivery of its diverse Sustainable Communities agenda, ODPM had planned to spend almost £36 million on external analytical work and analysis in 2005/’06. Around £23 million of this planned expenditure was expected to be from its eight analytical programmes and £13 million from policy programmes. Analytical work was also carried out internally but the balance of in-house to commissioned work varied considerably across the analytical units.

Delivery of Science

9. A large proportion of ODPM’s analytical work was carried out and managed within specialist units covering social science, physical science, statistics and economics. Analysts covering the diverse analytical disciplines were located in one of the following structural arrangements: a centrally-located Analytical Services Directorate (ASD); a few mixed policy / analysts teams; and few teams where specialist analysts were also responsible for policy development. Following the recommendations of an earlier review,⁴ changes including the introduction of mixed-discipline analytical teams had been initiated within ASD. Analytical support was provided to the Department’s eight analytical programmes managed by the analytical units within the aforementioned structural arrangements.

10. ODPM’s CSA was supported by a small team within ASD. The team was also responsible for running the Department’s New Horizons programme, co-ordinating the development of ODPM’s analytical strategy and for providing the secretariat to the Department’s Analytical Strategy Board (ASB). The role of the team, supported by analysts, had been strengthened to carry out analysis to support corporate strategy and provide greater coherence and support for analytical work in the Department.

⁴ Review of Analysis and Research in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – January 2005 (not published).

3. Review Methodology (see Annex 7 for details)

11. The review of ODPM was carried out in part by staff in OSI and partly by consultants from Momenta and was overseen by an external Steering Panel of senior officials, academics and other experts (see Annex 8 for information on the Steering Panel).

12. The review consisted of an analysis of information from various sources, including: existing written documentation from the Department, external consultation, interviews with ODPM's stakeholders, interviews with ODPM staff, four case studies to generate detailed information on how ODPM's science operated in practice against all ten success criteria and a peer review of ten projects that had been commissioned by ODPM.

4. ODPM's review of Analytical Services

13. Following its creation, ODPM had considered its overall approach to research and analytical activity and in late 2004 commissioned an external review of its analytical services. The study was commissioned to review the current and medium term analysis and research needs of the Department and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the prevailing arrangements in meeting those needs. The remit of the study did not cover the quality of ODPM's research and analytical outputs except insofar as it was necessary to formulate a view on their fitness for purpose. Some of the changes which arose out of the recommendations of ODPM's review were pertinent to OSI's review criteria and have been recognised where appropriate.

5. Main Findings and Recommendations

Strategic approach to analysis and research

14. A significant development, initiated by recommendations of ODPM's own review of its analytical services, was the establishment of the Analytical Strategy Board in 2005. The Board played a key role in helping ODPM identify the analysis needed to deliver its strategic priorities and Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. This had led to the development of ODPM's Evidence and Innovation Strategy (E&IS) and the establishment of processes to keep it updated in the light of emerging issues.

15. Although compliant with OSI's guidance on departmental science strategies, the E&I strategy and its development would benefit from wider consultation at the formative stages and inputs including horizon scanning. Linking the E&I strategy to corresponding strategies of other departments with which it shares science interests would help CLG identify opportunities for synergy and a better understanding of its research and analytical needs.

Widening the evidence base

16. ODPM's 'corporate' horizon scanning activities were in their early stages and were found to be limited to monitoring socio-economic and physical changes and trends to anticipate developments and their implications for its key policy areas. There was a growing awareness of the importance of horizon scanning in ODPM demonstrated by its analytical work for CSR'07⁵ to address the implications of long-term challenges identified by HM Treasury .

⁵ Comprehensive Spending Review.

17. Although a range of activities broadly interpreted as horizon scanning were being undertaken at a divisional level, the Department was not at a stage where it had acquired a shared understanding of horizon scanning and how the results might be used. The review noted with approval that ODPM had begun to participate in Foresight projects relevant to its key policy objectives, and had identified its engagement with wider horizon scanning activities across government as a priority in its E&IS.

18. To maximise the benefits of horizon scanning the review recommends that: CLG:
- promotes a shared understanding across the Department of its principles and identifies opportunities for demonstrating its benefits.
 - widens its horizon scanning with a greater emphasis on cross-cutting issues and the inclusion of monitoring developments in science and technology.
 - ensures that the results of horizon scanning and Foresight are used to inform the E&I strategy and policy making as appropriate.

Systematic processes and stewardship

19. While ODPM had guidance for commissioning and managing research, it did not include any systematic guidance for reviewing existing science. Formal as well as a variety of informal methods were used to review existing science and sometimes the consequences of this were that:

- ODPM was not able to ensure that all relevant science had been taken into account; and
- there was insufficient awareness of in-house data and analyses which could have avoided the unnecessary commissioning of analytical work.

20. The review found that, in general, the commissioning of science was guided by well-established procedures. However, the Review found significant inconsistencies in the conduct and effectiveness of these processes, sometimes in large and high profile projects, and this had undermined the Department's ability to act as an intelligent customer. On such occasions, the Department had not been able to ensure an adequate level of competition in the selection of contractors and had been too reliant on those that were selected for the development of objectives and the subsequent management of important elements of commissioned projects.

21. To assure itself that the contractors it selects have the necessary skills and balance of expertise, CLG should ensure that its tendering processes encourage the widest possible competition. Furthermore, it should assure itself that it maintains the necessary internal expertise to project manage and evaluate work, and that senior analysts and policy makers are sufficiently involved to ensure the quality and relevance of the work.

22. ODPM had stated its commitment to peer review of its analytical work in its Evidence and Innovation Strategy, and peer review did take place. However the review found that peer review of externally-commissioned projects was normally carried out selectively, guided by considerations of project costs and the impact of poor quality work. The credibility and effectiveness of policies depend on the quality of the underlying science. By ensuring a sound basis for decisions, cost savings can be realised by not having to defend decisions based on science which may be considered questionable. To this end, the review recommends that CLG :

- Sets up stepwise, scaleable peer review arrangements and develops and introduces the necessary guidance for it to be implemented consistently across the organisation;
- Ensures that peer review:
 - is independent and, as far as possible, external;
 - includes peer input, (during the development of the project);
and peer review (expert evaluation of the research or analytical work).

Use of science and scientific expertise

23. ODPM's analytical work to support its wide remit relied on expertise across many disciplines which included social science, economics, physical sciences and statistics. In addition to the in-house expertise, it also drew on expertise from a wide range of networks including the four research networks it maintained.

24. The Review found that on the whole, ODPM was much more receptive to social and economic research results because these were consistently relevant to its objectives and it had the expertise to use them. For example, in its work relating to neighbourhood renewal, social exclusion, local and regional government and housing, ODPM was predisposed to drawing on socio-economic evidence. On the other hand, analytical work relating to building regulations, civil resilience and fire research was predominantly driven by 'hard science'. The Review noted a significant perception among those outside the Department and among some internally, that ODPM may not have been sufficiently aware of the range of relevant science that it could have considered in the development of its policies or in the understanding of issues which required policy interventions.

25. Nevertheless the Review found examples in parts of ODPM where there was growing awareness of the importance of considering evidence from a wider range of analytical disciplines. For example analysts in Fire Research, Building Regulations and Civil Resilience, possibly prompted by events such as 9/11, had actively sought to take account of the results of social research which they had not hitherto been aware of or had considered. Equally, analysts supporting policy relating to neighbourhood renewal had taken account of research on developments in information technology to inform their understanding of issues relating to social exclusion.

26. The Review commends this good practice and recommends that CLG encourages the wider adoption of this practice by:

- Considering the establishment of policy-facing multidisciplinary teams, including natural scientists, to support each of its policy sectors with the identification of its science needs.

27. ODPM's access to expertise had not been sufficiently wide and this had resulted in difficulties with:

- setting up advisory panels particularly for complex and multifaceted projects; and
- ensuring that contractors had the requisite skills and balance of expertise.

28. The review commends the steps taken by ODPM to work with ESRC to build expertise within the university base and recommends that CLG makes better use of skills within the research base and make more use of European and international advisory mechanisms.



Introduction

How to Read this Report

29. This chapter sets out the background and rationale behind the science reviews together with an overview of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) – the fourth Government department to be reviewed.

30. The main findings emerging from the Review, and the recommendations made in relation to them, are presented in the next chapter. *The Findings and Recommendations* chapter summarises: the issues the Review aimed to examine, together with a rationale for this, and the main findings and recommendations that have emerged. Detailed evidence supporting the main findings is presented in the following Annexes which are available via OSI's website:⁶

Annex 1	Peer Review Exercise
Annex 2	Case Study 1 – Revision of Planning Policy Guidance
Annex 3	Case Study 2 – The Government's Response to The Barker Review
Annex 4	Case Study 3 – Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme
Annex 5	Case Study 4 – The Arson Control Forum
Annex 6	External Stakeholder Consultation
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Annex 8	Information on the Steering Panel

31. The remaining Annexes set out how the Review was conducted (Annex 7), and provide information on the terms of reference and membership of the Steering Panel (Annex 8).

32. This report for Communities and Local Government presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations which have emerged from the Science Review of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The contents are presented under the headings of the ten key attributes for effective management of science and research within Government (Science Strategy, Horizon Scanning etc.) The key findings and recommendations from these are set out below. Wherever appropriate, the findings also include changes that have been introduced by CLG since its creation.

33. For each of the review criteria, examples of good practice have been identified where appropriate, along with suggested areas for improvement.

⁶ <http://www.dti.gov.uk/science/science-in-govt/works/science-reviews/review/clg/page24794.html>

The Science Reviews

Background

34. Government departments have responsibility for funding and carrying out the science they need to support their policy, regulatory and other activities. In general, this system works well but there are concerns that standards and practices vary from department to department more than can be justified by the particular circumstances of the individual departments. Furthermore, recent crises such as the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreaks have heightened concern about the quality of Government science and science-based policy.

35. In December 2001, the Ministerial Committee on Science Policy agreed that the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser – Sir David King, should have functional responsibility for maintaining the quality and vigour of science in all Government departments. Accordingly, the Government's *Cross-Cutting Review of Science and Research* (March 2002)⁷ and its strategy for science, engineering and technology *Investing in Innovation* (July 2002)⁸ recommended that a new team (the Science Review Team) should be set up in the Office of Science and Technology (OST, now the Office of Science and Innovation: OSI) to take forward a new rolling programme of external scrutiny and benchmarking of the ways in which Government departments use science and manage research and to reinforce good practice and standards across departments.

Aim of the Science Reviews

36. The aim of the OSI Science Reviews is to maintain and improve the ways in which Government departments use science and manage research.

37. For the purposes of the Science Reviews a broad definition of *science* is used, which includes physical, natural and social science, economics, statistics research and data collection (monitoring and surveillance) activities – see Glossary.

Focus

38. To formulate a view on the quality and use of science in ODPM, the Science Review focused on ten attributes that underpin good practice in the use of science by Government departments, as identified in the *Cross-Cutting Review* (illustrated in Diagram 1 below). The rationale behind each of the attributes is set out in Table 1.

⁷ Cross-Cutting Review of Science and Research, March 2002 (http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/3A7B0/science_crosscutter.pdf).

⁸ *Investing in Innovation: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology*, July 2002 (http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr02/spend_sr02_science.cfm).

Table 1

Rationale

The overall aim of the OSI Science Reviews is to maintain and improve the ways in which Government departments use science and manage research.

1. Develop a clear, overall science and/or research strategy

Departments should take a strategic approach to setting R&D budgets, and should publish science and innovation strategies that set out the broad framework within which research programmes and other science-related activities are carried out. This is an important step in linking research and development to the delivery of a department's objectives and showing how value for money is achieved.

2. Horizon Scan – to identify future science-related issues

Horizon scanning is defined as the systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities and likely developments including but not restricted to those at the margins of current thinking and planning. Horizon scanning may explore novel and unexpected issues as well as persistent problems or trends. Departments should regularly undertake horizon scanning to improve the robustness of their evidence base and policies.

3. Review and harness existing research and identify gaps and opportunities for future research

To demonstrate value for money and effective use of resources, departments should have in place effective arrangements for deciding what current or potential science could benefit the department's delivery of its objectives and hence whether new research is needed or where it would best be targeted. In particular, departments should actively manage existing knowledge, synthesise existing research, and work with other Government departments (OGDs) and the research bases in the UK and internationally.

4. Commission and managing new research

All scientific work commissioned and used by Government departments should be of appropriately high quality, drawn from the best possible sources (including the science base and the private sector), commanding the confidence of Government Ministers and officials. Departments must be able to commission the right research, monitor its progress and assess its quality, and use it effectively.

5. Ensuring quality and relevance of science

As part of the drive for evidence-based policy and improved service delivery the Government needs to use, and be seen to use, high quality science and the most appropriate technologies. Research programmes funded by Government departments make a very important contribution to policy formulation. Even though the outcomes of the research itself cannot always be predicted, departments must be able to commission the right research, assess its quality, and use it effectively. The credibility of departmental policy-making generally will be undermined if individual policies are perceived to be based on poor, or the wrong science.

6. Using science and scientific advice

Departments need scientific advice to underpin their policy-making and regulatory activities. Such advice can be provided by external or internal experts, and / or informed by the output of research programmes commissioned by the department. There needs to be an effective communications bridge between the experts and the policy makers.

7. Publish results and debate their findings and implications openly

In the spirit of openness, and to ensure robust interpretation of scientific findings and their policy implications, departments should publish and openly debate scientific results.

8. Sharing and transferring knowledge

Knowledge transfer should be treated by departments as a strategic goal and enjoy high-level focus.

9. Implementing Guidelines 2005 and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees

Guidelines 2005⁹ is a high-level document aimed at the way Government departments obtain and use scientific advice in policy making. Its key messages are that departments should: think ahead and identify early the issues on which they need scientific advice; get a wide range of advice from the best sources, particularly where there is scientific uncertainty; and publish the scientific advice and all relevant papers. The Guidelines have been drawn upon in formulating the ten key criteria for the OSI Reviews.

The purpose of the Code of Practice¹⁰ is to provide more detailed guidance specifically focused on the operation of scientific advisory committees and their relationship with Government and to help them translate the principles in the Guidelines into day-to-day practice.

10. Use, maintain and develop scientific expertise (including both capacity and capability building)

Whether a department has its own dedicated research unit, or commissions work from outside organisations, it needs to ensure it has long-term access to experienced scientists who are able to understand and interpret issues at the science-policy interface, taking into account the full range of scientific opinion as appropriate.

⁹ Office of Science and Technology. *Guidelines on Scientific Analysis in Policy Making*, October 2005. (<http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/files9767.pdf>). (Replaced: OST. *Guidelines 2000: Scientific advice and policy making*, July 2000.)

¹⁰ Office of Science and Technology. *Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees*, December 2001. (<http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/files9769.pdf>).

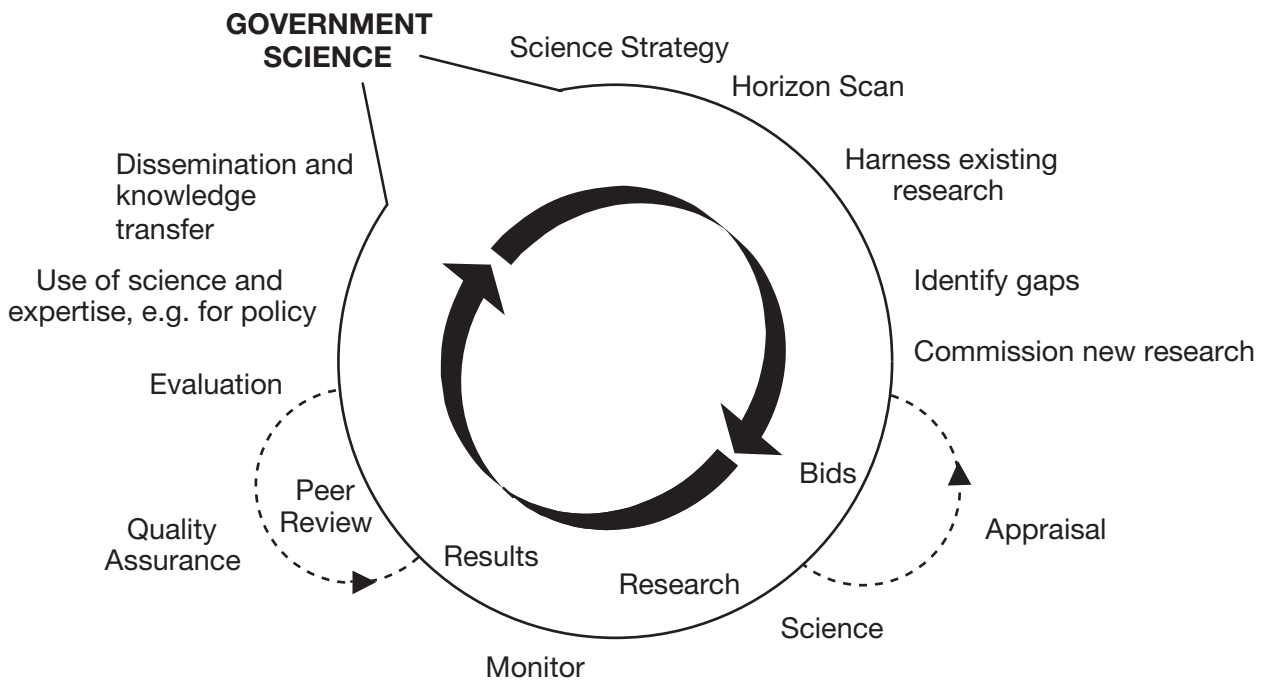


Diagram 1.

Order of Science Reviews

39. *Investing in Innovation* outlined the Government's long-term vision for science in the UK, including the intention to undertake a rolling programme of reviews looking at the quality and use of science in the main science-using Government departments.

40. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport was the first department to be reviewed in accordance with this strategy. Reviews of HSE, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM now Communities and Local Government) have subsequently been undertaken.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

41. This section sets out the ODPM's areas of responsibility, the areas in which science was or should have been important, and the particular circumstances and conditions that related to ODPM and its use of science. When CLG was created in May 2006, it took over these responsibilities as well as some of those which had been within the Home Office and DTI until then.

42. ODPM stated its core purpose as building sustainable communities through long term investment under its two plans: Homes for All; and People, Places and Prosperity. It aimed to "provide many more people with more choices and fairness in housing" and to "work across the whole of Government to promote prosperity for all and help local people create Sustainable Communities they can feel proud of: places where people want to live and work, now and in the future."

Strategic Aims

43. ODPM's aim of delivering sustainable communities was translated into the following five strategic priorities:

- a) Delivering a better balance between housing supply and demand
- b) Ensuring people had decent places to live
- c) Tackling disadvantage
- d) Developing better public services
- e) Promoting the development of the English regions.

44. Most of ODPM's activities were cross-cutting in that its policy programmes had an impact on several strategic priorities.

45. The outcomes ODPM expected to achieve in support of each of its strategic priorities are summarised in Table 2:

a) Balancing housing supply and demand

Deliver a better balance between housing supply and demand by supporting sustainable growth reviving markets and tackling abandonment:

- build more homes where they are needed most, protect the countryside, historic towns and cities and provide jobs, infrastructure and public services;
- increase opportunities for home ownership provided owners are able to sustain the accompanying commitments;
- offer greater quality, flexibility and choice in the rental sector;
- revive failing housing markets; and
- enhance the environment.

b) Decent places to live

Ensure people have decent places to live by improving the quality and sustainability of local environments and neighbourhoods, reviving brownfield land, and improving the quality of housing:

- offer greater quality, flexibility and choice to those who rent, whether from a local authority, housing association or private landlord focusing on quality; and
- enhance the local environment.

c) Tackling disadvantage

Tackling disadvantage by reviving the most deprived neighbourhoods, reducing social exclusion and supporting society's most vulnerable groups:

- expand housing opportunities for all, including for those who need additional support, and for the disadvantaged sections; and
- narrow the gap between the best and worst off to make sure opportunity and choice are for all.

d) Delivering better services

Delivering better services, by devolving decision-making to the most effective level – regional, local or neighbourhood:

- promoting high quality, customer-focused local services and ensuring that adequate, stable resources are available to local government;
- clarifying the roles and functions of local government, its relationship with central and regional government and the arrangements for neighbourhood; and
- engagement, in the context of a shared strategy for local government.

e) Promoting development of English regions

Promoting the development of the English regions by improving their economic performance so that all are able to reach their full potential, and developing an effective framework for regional governance taking account of the public's view of what's best for their area:

- strong economies in all regions, offering opportunities to everyone to share in increased prosperity;
- regions that connect policies from across Government with local people;
- aspiring to increase the employment ratio to 80%; and
- better integrated housing and planning strategies.

ODPM science

46. To support the delivery of its diverse Sustainable Communities agenda, ODPM had planned to spend almost £36 million on external analytical work and analysis in 2005/'06. Around £23 million of this planned expenditure was expected to be from its eight analytical programmes and £13 million from policy programmes.

47. ODPM's science included a broad range of analytical work and covered work done by physical scientists, social researchers, economists, statisticians, operational researchers and geographical information specialists.

48. ODPM's analytical work was covered by eight analytical programmes supported by 12 analytical units. Work was either carried out internally or commissioned through external contracts and the balance of this tended to vary considerably across the different analytical units. However, the review noted an increasing tendency towards internal work as well as the synthesis of existing evidence.

49. Analysts covering the diverse disciplines were located in one of the following structural arrangements: a centrally-located Analytical Services Directorate (ASD); a few mixed policy / analysts teams; and few teams where specialist analysts were also responsible for policy development. As a result of the recommendations of an earlier review,¹¹ analysts within ASD were organised into four mixed-discipline policy-facing analytical teams and an Analytical Strategy and Co-ordination Team (ASCT) to provide better coherence and support for analytical work in the Department.

¹¹ Review of Analysis and Research in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – January 2005 (not published).



Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

50. This Chapter presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Science Review of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The material is presented under the headings of the ten key attributes for effective management of science and research within Government (Science Strategy, Horizon Scanning, etc.).

51. It is important to note that the focus of the Review is on ODPM which ceased to exist when Communities and Local Government (CLG) was created in May 2006. The responsibilities of the former ODPM were brought together within CLG and at the same time its remit was widened to include related areas formerly covered by the Home Office and DTI. The remit of CLG now includes local government, housing, planning, neighbourhood renewal, civil renewal, community cohesion and equalities.

52. Most of the fieldwork for the review was completed prior to the creation of CLG and as such, the findings presented refer to ODPM throughout this report. However, wherever appropriate, the findings recognise the changes that have been introduced or are planned by CLG, insofar as they are pertinent to the Review criteria. The conclusions based on the findings and the recommendations that flow from it are for CLG to consider alongside organisational changes following its establishment and the continuing implementation of the recommendations of an earlier review¹² of ODPM's analytical services. The emerging findings which OSI had shared with ODPM at various stages of the Review will have informed the organisational changes which the Department had initiated and which CLG has continued to develop following its creation. We therefore recognise that some of the recommendations in the Review may well coincide with the changes CLG has started implementing, as part of its wide-ranging Transformation Programme to build its capacity to meet current and future delivery challenges.

How to read this Chapter

53. Each of the ten sections in this chapter opens with a review of why the heading (issue) is important, extracts of statements made by ODPM in relation to the topic, and the main issues arising that the Review sought to address. The bulk of each section is taken up by the main findings emanating from the Review, and the corresponding recommendations. The findings draw on the interviews with ODPM staff and on the information provided in the Annexes.

54. As with all the Chapters, it is important to note the following definition that has been used in the Review: other than where specified, *science* is used as an all-encompassing term which includes natural sciences, social sciences, economics, statistics, research, physical science and engineering.

¹² Review of Analysis and Research in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – January 2005 (not published).

1. Science Strategy

Rationale

55. Departments should take a strategic approach to setting R&D budgets, and should publish science and innovation strategies that set out the broad framework within which research programmes and other science-related activities are carried out. This is an important step in linking research and development to the delivery of a department's objectives and showing how value for money is achieved.¹³

ODPM statements

56. In The Forward Look 2003, Yvette Cooper, Minister in ODPM,¹⁴ stated:

“The Office’s overall aim is the creation of thriving, inclusive and sustainable communities in all regions. To support these objectives the Office relies on research to provide the evidence base to inform and support current and future Ministerial decisions and support policy refinement, implementation and evaluation. The Office also builds links with the wider research community to develop capacity and strengthen the research-policy interface and supports public and private stakeholders to implement government policy, through provision of research evidence and research-based guidance.”¹⁵

57. The Department published its initial Science and Innovation Strategy 2003-2005 which highlighted its reliance on a broad research base encompassing social science, economics, physical science and statistics. It set out how it carried out research, supported innovation, and how research supported its policy, and helped meet its PSA Targets.¹⁶

58. To communicate the broad range of science used to build its evidence base, ODPM subsequently followed this up with the publication of its Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005-2008 in which its Permanent Secretary stated:

“One of the most significant challenges we face in creating and delivering sustainable communities, is acquiring and using evidence to help us understand the needs of the residents of our cities, towns and countryside. We need to understand what works in sustainable communities; and we need to communicate this evidence effectively to those making the key decisions that can deliver sustainable communities.”¹⁷

¹³ Cross-Cutting Review of Science and Research: Final Report (March 2002), page 87, HM Treasury, Department for Education and Skills, Office of Science and Technology and Department of Trade and Industry.

¹⁴ Following restructuring, ODPM became Communities and Local Government in May 2006.

¹⁵ Yvette Cooper, The Forward Look 2003; Government funded science, engineering and technology (July 2003), OST.

¹⁶ Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2003-2005 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1142057>

¹⁷ Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005 – 2008.

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/404/FromEvidencetoActionEvidencebaseddeliveryofSustainableCommunities_id1164404.pdf

Evidence sought

59. The E&I Strategy 2005 – 2008, developed by ODPM, is a detailed document which builds on the Department's first Science and Innovation Strategy (S&IS) published in 2003. The review sought to establish: the extent to which the strategy had progressed from the previous version towards conforming to OSI guidance on Departmental Science and Innovation Strategies; how the strategy was developed and how ODPM prioritised its analytical needs.

Findings

60. CLG concluded its consultation on the E&I Strategy developed by ODPM, on 9th June 2006. The strategy was developed to address ODPM's priorities and is now being updated by CLG to take account of its widened remit following its establishment in May.

Characteristics of E&I Strategy

61. Much of the 2003 – 2005 Science and Innovation Strategy was a description of how the ODPM carried out its research and analytical work in support of its policy objectives. There were some references to the additional work that may be required in future to support specific PSA targets or to work that ought to be carried out. The strategy was largely aspirational and lacked detail on research priorities, costing and how the analytical work would be delivered.

62. By comparison, the 2005 – 2008 E&I Strategy is a detailed document¹⁸ which includes all analytical work¹⁹ and sets out:

- ODPM's analytical priorities for the period up to 2007/'08;
- the processes it would use to deliver analysis and research; and
- how it would ensure that key stakeholders could access and use the evidence effectively.

63. The main part of the strategy is compliant with the OSI's guidance for departmental science and innovation strategies. It demonstrates a clear link between the themes identified for analytical work and the Department's eleven key priorities which flowed from eight PSA targets associated with its five strategic priorities²⁰ (see figures 1 and 2).

64. The strategy recognises the need for closer analytical engagement with government departments and other organisations on key projects in its priority areas. To this end, key analytical themes and work streams with potential for such engagement have been identified.

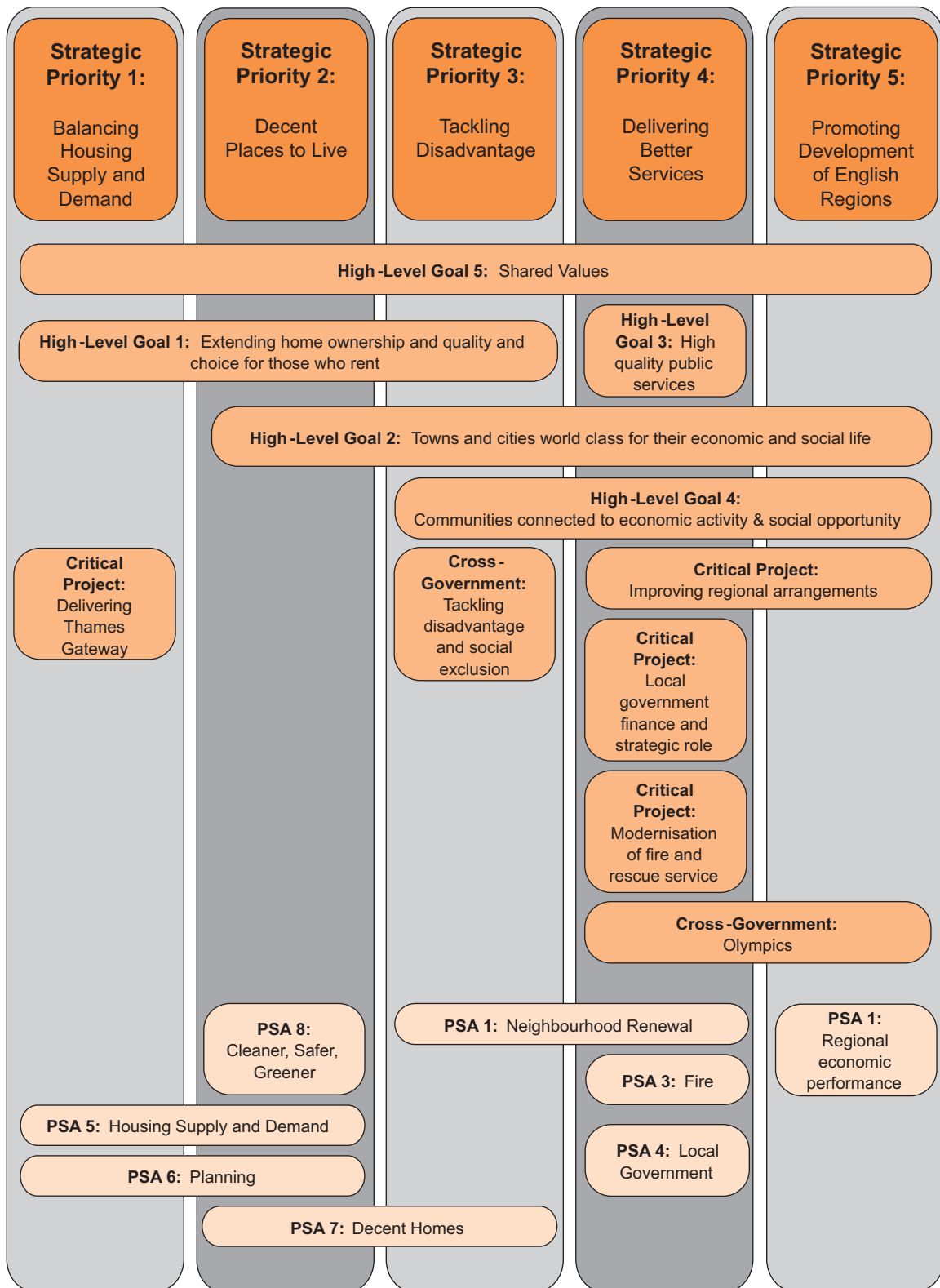
65. Nevertheless there are elements of the strategy which could have included more detail to make the Department's intentions explicit or set out how it expects to address specific issues. For instance, with regard to peer review of its analytical work, it is not clear whether ODPM had intended using peer review selectively or on all its analysis nor the extent to which its analytical work would be subjected to independent external scrutiny. The Review would have found the strategy satisfactory if it had included this information and indicated how ODPM intended working with OGDs in areas of common interest either through existing structures or those it might develop.

¹⁸ *Evidence and Innovation 2005-2008* consists of two separate documents: analytical priorities and a background document setting out CLG's resources and processes for delivering its analytical priorities.

¹⁹ PIU Report "Adding it Up"(2000): "involves the examination and interpretation of data and other information, both qualitative and quantitative, to provide insights to improve the formulation of policy and delivery of services".

²⁰ Identified in *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All; Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity*.

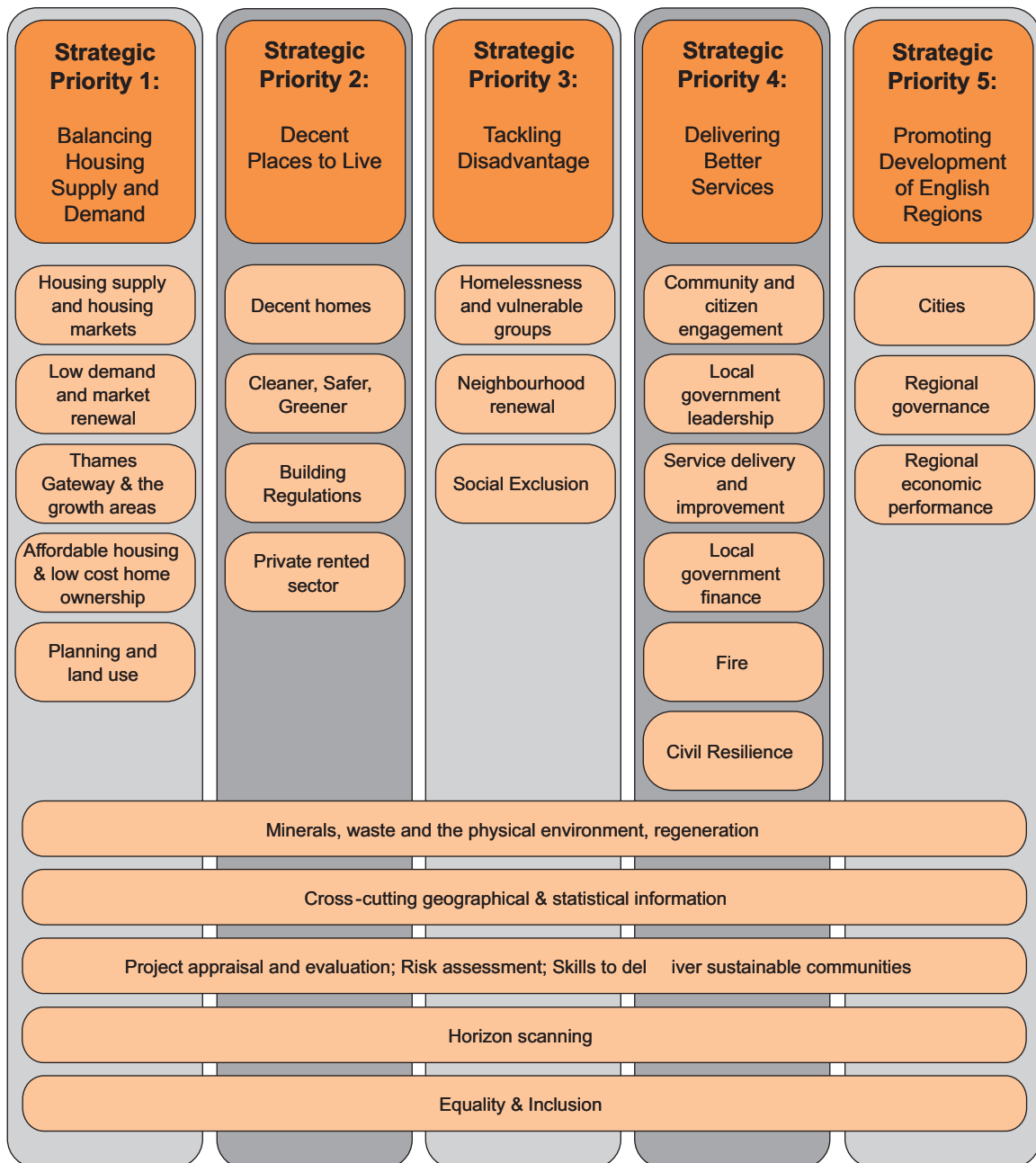
Figure 1. ODPM's High Level Goals, Strategic Priorities and Public Service Agreement Targets Alignment²¹



Source: CLG

²¹ Although CLG is updating these to reflect its new remit, Figs 1 and 2 have been included to demonstrate good practice adopted by ODPM to communicate how its analytical priorities are aligned to its PSA targets and strategic goals. CLG has adopted this framework to help identify its analytical needs to support its policy objectives.

Figure 2. Strategic Priorities and Analytical Themes



Development of the E&I strategy

66. In contrast to its previous S&I strategy, the review noted that the latest strategy had been developed using a consultative approach. The Director of Research and Analysis and the head of the Analytical Co-ordination Team²² in close collaboration with the heads of Analytical Units had jointly developed the strategy. The newly-formed Analytical Strategy Board (ASB) which established the top analytical priorities for the Department subsequently reviewed the priorities identified as a result of these consultations. It was clear from interviews with ODPM staff that analysts had been closely involved in the development of the strategy. However the review found that the extent to which heads of policy units were directly involved in its development or in the subsequent consultation appeared to vary.

67. The review found no evidence of consultation with key external stakeholders at the formative stages of the E&I strategy or the use of wider sources of intelligence such as horizon scanning to inform the development of the strategy. Nevertheless external research stakeholders, including representatives of ODPM's Research Networks as well as key external policy stakeholders, were invited to a meeting to review the draft strategy and provide input and comment. ODPM's consultation on the strategy through its website which began on 21st March and which was subsequently concluded by CLG on 9th June 2006 generated around six responses possibly because the consultation was not publicised. The strategy is being updated by CLG in response to the consultation and to reflect the wider remit CLG acquired following its creation.

68. The Capability Review²³ of CLG reported that "good work is now in hand to develop a more systematic and targeted approach to stakeholder management, which will assist the Department in shaping policy and building consensus." It added "the Department is making progress in bringing external partners and other government departments together around the needs of particular places. It is looking at ways to improve feedback loops to help sustain partnership and assess delivery."

Awareness and use of the E&I Strategy

69. Knowledge of the current strategy was high among those who were involved in its development, particularly the heads of analytical units and some policy staff. Although wider awareness of the E&I strategy and its predecessor was generally low, its development was nevertheless broadly welcome by analysts and policy staff. Most internal and external stakeholders believed that it would help ODPM identify its key priorities and achieve greater coherence in its analytical activities. CLG has started to use the strategy to prioritise its analytical work and intends to identify the resources required, to deliver its analytical priorities, in its CSR '07 bid.

²² The Analytical Co-ordination Team within the Analytical Services Directorate, which was responsible for co-ordinating analytical activities across ODPM was expanded to become the Analytical Strategy and Co-ordination Team to provide better coherence and support for CLG's analytical work.

²³ Capability Review: http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/capability_reviews/publications/pdf/Capability_Review_DCLG.pdf

Governance

70. In May 2005, ODPM set up the Analytical Strategy Board²⁴ (ASB) to “act as a champion for evidence-based policy making and delivery across the Department and for ensuring that policy and analysis are fully integrated”. The ASB was specifically set up to take a more strategic view of ODPM’s analytical needs in relation to both annual analytical programmes and long-term analytical strategies. Since its formation, the ASB had enabled ODPM to ensure that its E&I strategy covered the disparate research interests across the Department and that the E&I strategy was aligned to its overall business strategy.

71. The publication of ODPM’s key policy documents and its 5-year business strategy provided the trigger for major reviews of analytical themes but there was also an annual process for considering analytical themes (see section 3). The ASB was expected to identify emerging policy issues which would require analytical resources and explore longer-term cross-cutting trends and drivers. Its recommendations to Ministers to ensure that the distribution of analytical resources was in line with agreed priorities was based on a cross-Departmental view of key analytical priorities.

72. As part of the annual process for reviewing its analytical themes CLG expects to update the parts of the strategy covering cross-cutting issues and the delivery of analytical work. Following its establishment, CLG announced²⁵ the setting up of nine Programme Executives.²⁶ They are expected to provide clarity and focus to major areas of CLG’s business, simplify reporting lines to the Board and Ministers, match resources to priorities and solve problems. CLG expects the new Programme Executives to be the principal means through which it sets the strategic direction of its work, drives performance, cutting across organisational and professional boundaries within the Department and drawing in key stakeholders. A recent review²⁷ reported that these Executives are becoming effective for tackling difficult issues. However the review also noted that more effort is needed “to ensure consistency, accountability and rigour across the work of the Executives, in asking the right questions about resource deployment and progress on delivery.”

²⁴ A standing committee of the CLG board: members include senior policy officials, heads of all analytical professions and the Chief Government Social Researcher.

²⁵ Building the Department for Communities and Local Government – Next Steps July 2006.

²⁶ Cities and Regions, Housing and Planning, Local Government Futures, Communities, Thames Gateway and Olympics, Fire and Resilience, Equalities, Corporate Modernisations and Climate Change and Buildings.

²⁷ Capability Reviews: http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/capability_reviews/publications/pdf/Capability_Review_DCLG.pdf

Conclusions and recommendations

73. The review noted the progress ODPM had made towards developing an E&I Strategy aligned to its strategic objectives and PSA targets. In particular the review commends the establishment of the ASB and the introduction of processes for the review of analytical priorities to help keep the strategy annually updated. Furthermore the review welcomes the setting up of the nine programme executives to help identify critical priorities, match resources to priorities and avoid duplication of effort. Notwithstanding any structural changes which CLG may carry out in the light of its widened remit, the Review recommends that the functions of the ASB should be maintained.

Recommendation 1:

To build on the progress it has made on its E&I Strategy, CLG should acquire comprehensive intelligence to inform the strategy. In particular, CLG should:

- **involve its internal and external stakeholders at the formative stages of the strategy.**
- **ensure that horizon scanning is part of the intelligence that informs the development of the strategy.**
- **link its strategy with that of OGDs with which it has common science interests such as Defra, DTI and DWP.**

and to ensure the widest possible engagement of its stakeholders:

- **identify and adopt good practice with regard to stakeholder consultation at the formative stages of the strategy, from other government departments (e.g. Defra and MoD).**
- **publicise the launch of consultation on the strategy.**

2. Horizon Scanning

Rationale

74. Horizon scanning is defined as the systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities and likely future developments, which are at the margins of current thinking and planning. Horizon scanning may explore novel and unexpected issues, as well as persistent problems or trends. Departments should regularly undertake horizon scanning to improve the robustness of their evidence base and policies.

ODPM Statements

75. In relation to its risk management procedures ODPM stated:

“As part of this approach, we are increasingly aware of the need to understand how horizon scanning is occurring across ODPM and the need for analytical support to provide evidence relating to substantive issues of risk not associated with process risk. This includes risks associated with external trends in social, economic and physical change. This area of work therefore is a priority for further scoping and development over the coming three years.”²⁸

76. The E&I Strategy identified the following horizon scanning priorities for 2005-08:

- *Review of long term trends and future scenarios that will impact on the Department’s long term agenda, as part of the initial work for the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR’07);*
- *Review of horizon scanning practices across ODPM;*
- *More analytical support to managing risk and uncertainty across ODPM’s remit with a focus on areas where additional evidence is required to develop effective risk management strategies on non-process issues;*
- *Deliver a flexible, horizon scanning programme relevant across ODPM;*
- *Support for and engagement with cross-Government horizon scanning activities and projects including a new Horizon Scanning Centre.*

Evidence Sought

77. The review sought to determine: how horizon scanning was organised and carried out by ODPM; the extent to which external stakeholders were encouraged to engage with ODPM’s horizon scanning activities; and how the results of horizon scanning activities were used by the Department.

²⁸ Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005-2008 paragraph 3.88 page 96.

Findings

78. ODPM carried out its main horizon scanning activities through its New Horizons Programme (NHP) which began in 2002. The Analytical Strategy and Co-ordination Team (ASCT) ran the programme²⁹ under the direction of the Department's Chief Scientist. Around £750k was allocated to the programme and half of this was spent on capacity building through the joint funding of three postgraduate studentships per year with ESRC but CLG are considering alternative approaches (discussed under criterion 10.). The techniques ODPM used to support its horizon scanning work were primarily focused on trend analysis, scenario planning and literature review.

New Horizons Programme

79. The NHP is limited in scope in that it is essentially a research programme designed to provide an understanding of the implications of future developments for specific policy areas. Each year the NHP normally began with the development of a draft prospectus for cross-cutting, forward-looking and Department-wide research around three or four themes. The draft was based on various discussions with policy colleagues in strategic roles, reviews of key documents e.g. 5-year plans, seminars with external participants on strategic issues and a review of previous New Horizons projects identifying further areas for investigation. Once agreed, the prospectus was advertised on ODPM's website and also sent to its four research networks. Proposals were considered and selected by an advisory group comprising CLG analysts. Much of the work carried out by NHP involved futures-oriented reviews to identify areas of risk and uncertainty to inform thinking on possible futures of key policy areas.

Other activities

80. ODPM recognised the need to take a more strategic and flexible approach to horizon scanning and build on the broader horizon scanning activities being undertaken by others including other government departments.³⁰ To this end, and as part of its initial work for the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007(CSR'07), it had embarked on a review of long-term trends and future scenarios that would impact on its future agenda. In this, it had been supported by the ASB which was responsible for horizon scanning and for keeping the ODPM Board apprised of long-term cross-cutting trends and drivers. Engagement with horizon scanning activities in OGDs was recognised as a priority in the Department's E&I strategy and it had funded a project³¹ with the Department for Work and Pensions through the NHP (see box 1).

Box 1.

The project was an innovative study about the social exclusion of older people. It used 2002-2003 data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) which is a large-scale survey of people aged 50 and over living in England. The broad aim of the study was to see whether insights about social exclusion could be drawn from this relatively new data source in a way that might strengthen existing knowledge about the particular experiences of exclusion among older people. The main objective of this short project was to measure the patterns of different forms of social exclusion among older people and to examine the key risk factors, or indicators, of social exclusion among older people.

²⁹ Previously ACT (Analytical Co-ordination Team).

³⁰ Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005-2008 paragraph 3.91.

³¹ Analysis of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing: <http://www.rmd.odpm.gov.uk/project.asp?intProjectID=12169>

81. In addition to its central programme, ODPM had also encouraged horizon scanning to identify future challenges within each analytical theme. For example within the programmes for Fire and Local Government, analysts and policy staff had worked together to develop ten-year policy visions.

82. ODPM had also participated in two Foresight projects³² which had implications for its key policy areas. The review did not find any evidence to establish whether the results fed into policy or whether they were effectively disseminated across ODPM. Moreover the engagement of Foresight with parts of ODPM did not appear to have led to any expression of interest³³ from other parts of ODPM which could have benefited from these Foresight projects.

83. However CLG has recently agreed to work directly with Foresight on a project³⁴ – Sustainable Energy Management and the Built Environment – which will be led by Yvette Cooper, Minister for Housing and Planning.³⁵ In support of its commitment CLG has seconded a member of its staff to work full-time on the Project. Furthermore, given its interest in social inclusion, CLG expects to work with the group, led by The Academy of Medical Sciences, which is considering the issues raised by the Foresight report on Brain Science, Addiction and Drugs.³⁶ However the Review found that CLG’s involvement in the group is not yet at a level where it could be regarded as being fully engaged in its discussions.

84. The review found that the importance of horizon scanning was widely recognised across ODPM but there was a lack of shared understanding of what it involved and of the techniques that could be used. Possibly as a result of this, there were no systematic procedures for horizon scanning that were used across the analytical programmes. Most of ODPM’s key stakeholders were aware of NHP but the extent to which each of the four research networks participated was affected by the level of engagement achieved with the lead policy contact in ODPM and this was susceptible to organisational changes.

85. At the time of the review, horizon scanning activities in ODPM were not wide enough to monitor the range of influences that could impact on its policies. This was possibly as a result of the relatively modest resources devoted to it. Those closely involved with NHP felt that ODPM’s approach to horizon scanning was akin to OSI’s focused Foresight programmes, in that it involved research to inform specific policy areas rather than the systematic monitoring of trends and developments on a broad front and assessing the implications of these on their strategic priorities. They also stated that ODPM did not consider the impact of emerging technologies unless there were compelling reasons for doing so. One of the past consequences of this was that ODPM’s planning regulations had to be written retrospectively as the Department had not anticipated the impact of the rapid development and take-up of mobile communications technologies.

³² Foresight: Eighty-year scenarios on Future of Flooding; Intelligent Infrastructure Systems led by DFT.

³³ Foresight.

³⁴ Foresight: Sustainable energy management and the built environment.

³⁵ Yvette Cooper, Minister for Housing and Planning.

³⁶ Foresight report: Drugs Futures 2025 published July 2005.

Using the results of horizon scanning

86. Apart from the following example, the review did not find any evidence which could show how results of horizon scanning were being used by ODPM. Work on low demand housing markets³⁷ commissioned by NHP had considered the impact of changing demographics, long-term migration patterns and emerging employment centres. As the work had been carried out in advance of any need, the results were readily available when the issues addressed by the project became important for policy makers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

87. Following on from ODPM, the CLG Board continues to recognise the importance of horizon scanning and this is reflected in the Department's E&I Strategy and its analytical work for CSR'07 to address the long-term implications of the challenges set out by HM Treasury. The review noted that CLG is widening its activities beyond its New Horizon Programme by participating in OSI's Foresight projects relevant to its policies.

Recommendation 2:

To maximise the benefits that could be derived from horizon scanning, the review recommends that CLG should continue to improve its horizon scanning capability.

In particular CLG should:

- **widen its New Horizons Programme to incorporate a dedicated horizon scanning team³⁸ with links to the Evidence and Innovation Strategy process.**
- **augment the monitoring of social, economic and physical changes by monitoring trends in science and technology and considering the possible impact of emerging technologies. A simple and effective way of achieving this would be to refer to the OSI Horizon Scanning Centre's databases of future issues and trends (Sigma Scan and Delta Scan) and map relevant future issues against the Department's strategic plans.**
- **continue to develop links with OSI's Horizon Scanning Centre and with relevant OGDs to share good practice and exchange information.**
- **encourage the use of horizon scanning to support its reviews of current science particularly to inform its understanding of issues which may be affected by a multidisciplinary evidence base.**
- **develop mechanisms for involving its stakeholders in its horizon scanning activities.**

and to ensure its benefits are realised:

- **promote a shared understanding of horizon scanning and identify opportunities to demonstrate its benefits across the organisation.**
- **ensure that relevant findings from horizon scanning and participation in Foresight projects are taken up by the Department and passed to stakeholders.**

³⁷ Projects within the 'Step on the Housing Ladder' theme under NHP.

³⁸ A cost-effective way in which this could be achieved would be to set up a virtual team made of analysts and policy staff representing the broad range of the Department's interest which would meet at regular intervals to consider trends and developments on a broad front and assess the implications for the Department as a whole.

3. Reviewing existing research and identifying gaps and opportunities

Rationale

88. To demonstrate value for money and effective use of resources, departments should have in place effective arrangements for deciding what current or potential science could benefit the department's delivery and hence whether new research is needed or where it would best be targeted. In particular, departments should actively manage existing knowledge, synthesise existing research, and work with other government departments and the research bases in the UK and internationally.

ODPM statements

89. With regard to learning from existing knowledge, ODPM stated:

“ There is, of course, a huge amount of analytical work and evidence relevant to ODPM's agenda in other government departments and outside government. We are committed to ensuring that we learn from that knowledge rather than duplicate it.”³⁹

“... there is an increasing tendency towards internal work and synthesising existing evidence.”⁴⁰

Evidence sought

90. This review by OSI sought to determine: how existing science was reviewed by ODPM; how gaps in knowledge were identified and then addressed; how existing and emerging scientific knowledge influenced strategy and priority setting within the department; and how ODPM drew on the external expertise available to it to assist with these activities.

Findings

91. ODPM reviewed research to identify gaps at two levels: at a strategic level when its analytical themes were agreed and also when research projects were commissioned.

92. Following the publication of its Five Year Business Plan,⁴¹ ODPM reviewed the analytical themes of its eight analytical programmes in the light of the stated aims of its five strategic priorities and the specific deliverables associated with each of the priorities. Once the analytical themes were agreed, the Heads of Analytical Units in ODPM carried out reviews of its evidence base. The aim was to identify significant gaps in the evidence base that would impact on ODPM's ability to deliver evidence-based policy making in the areas addressed by its strategic priorities.

93. A mix of formal reviews,⁴² formal internal reviews⁴³ and informal reviews, which built on discussions with policy and analytical stakeholders, were carried out. Some reviews were commissioned specifically to inform the development of ODPM's E&I strategy and built on the initial work to inform its CSR'07 bid.

³⁹ Evidence and Innovation Strategy, page 103 paragraph 4.13

⁴⁰ *ibid*: How we deliver – page 6, paragraph 1.5

⁴¹ http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_about/documents/divisionhomepage/033927.hcsp

⁴² Social Exclusion Unit: Breaking the Cycle.

⁴³ Internal reviews of the evidence base for low demand and growth areas.

94. Prior to commissioning new research, analysts were expected to review existing science to identify gaps that the research would set out to address. Exceptions to this requirement were when there was an urgent need for research or when there was no in-house capacity to undertake a review. However there was no formal requirement in ODPM's Research Management Guidelines and the Project Information Form⁴⁴ (PIF) did not formally require them to do so. Moreover ODPM did not appear to have any systematic guidance for reviewing the available evidence. The Review noted that the existing guidelines were being reviewed in preparation for the introduction of updated guidelines.

95. When reviews of the available evidence were required, programme managers for each analytical programme engaged with relevant analysts, policy staff and external stakeholders. These normally included Government Offices, ODPM's Research Networks, Research Councils and OGDs as well as others. In some areas, such as Building Regulations, where framework contracts were in place, the Department's technical policy leads would typically commission its contractors to carry out reviews, taking into account guidance from the external Building Regulations Research Advisory Group, which included members of the statutory Building Regulations Advisory Committee. Equally, policy areas largely driven by social science such as neighbourhood renewal and social exclusion had sought evidence on developments in science and technology in considering the implications for their policies on social exclusion.

96. Some analytical programmes engaged with a very specific range of internal and external stakeholders such as those involved in the Fire and Building Regulations analytical programmes. In these programmes as well as Civil Resilience, the Review found that analysts recognised the benefits of reaching out beyond their 'traditional' analytical disciplines to take account of evidence that might be relevant from other disciplines such as social science.

97. Because of the cross-cutting nature of much of ASD's work its stakeholder engagement was normally much wider than that of other programmes.

98. In general, analysts as well as their policy counterparts, through their work and professional affiliations, picked up intelligence of what research was being conducted by other organisations. Links with other organisations,⁴⁵ national and international fora and networks⁴⁶ often provided opportunities for developing better-targeted research and collaboration. Although most analysts believed that important intelligence was gathered in this way, they commented that such processes tended to be unstructured and ad hoc.

99. In some areas where there was insufficient evidence or the quality of the available evidence was questionable, formal literature reviews were commissioned through competitive tendering.⁴⁷

100. Overall, there was a great deal of variation in the way science was reviewed. It was very reliant on the "institutional memory" resulting from the low turnover of analysts who had worked in a particular area for many years. This had enabled them to build up a broad map of the evidential base and keep abreast of the publication of significant and important research. In ASD's broad area this was dominant but the Review found that this approach also existed in other areas.

⁴⁴ Information on this form is used to seek authorisation for commissioning a project.

⁴⁵ e.g. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Housing Corporation, key academics.

⁴⁶ National Community Forum, Arson Control Forum.

⁴⁷ Review of the literature on the links between the finance and non-finance aspects of local government.

101. A peer review of ten projects was carried out to inform this Review. For the majority of projects, reviewers consistently commented that there was no evidence of a systematic or a thorough literature review and in cases where this was done, it was limited by the scope of the project.

102. Moreover all the four case studies undertaken as part of this Review indicated that the review of existing science was not as thorough and comprehensive as it could have been. This was particularly evident in complex policy areas that needed to draw on a multidisciplinary evidence base often involving a significant amount of natural science. The evidence suggests that this could be attributed to a number of factors: over reliance on contractors resulting from insufficient expertise in the natural sciences within the Department;⁴⁸ research driven by ministerial agendas; and large advisory panels which are too diverse, lack the right balance of expertise⁴⁹ and may be difficult to manage.

Conclusions and Recommendations

103. ODPM did not appear to have a standard policy or guidance for systematically reviewing scientific literature on issues relevant to its work. Rather, a range of formal and informal measures were used to harness information, such as maintaining a database of research commissioned by ODPM, some formal reviews and gathering intelligence from various networks (internal and external).

Recommendation 3:

To avoid the risk of duplication when projects are commissioned, and to ensure that all relevant research and evidence is taken into account, CLG should:

- **develop guidance for systematically reviewing research and evidence on issues relevant to its work and ensure that:**
 - **guidance on systematic reviews refers to the Government Social Research Network's Magenta Book⁵⁰ or similar guidance for conducting systematic literature reviews in other disciplines and draw on good practice for conducting or commissioning formal reviews used in parts of the Department.⁵¹**
 - **forms requesting authorisation for commissioning research seek an indication of how research and evidence has been reviewed and what confirmation has been sought that the required information does not already exist or is being researched elsewhere.**

⁴⁸ A Sustainability Impact Study of Additional Housing Scenarios in England.

⁴⁹ Footnote 45 and Arson Control Forum case study.

⁵⁰ http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/magenta_book/

⁵¹ including e.g. Local Government Research Unit, Social Exclusion Unit.

4. Commissioning and Managing New Research

and

5. Ensuring Quality and Relevance of Science

Rationale

104. As part of the drive for evidence-based policy and improved service delivery the Government needs to use, and be seen to use, high quality science and the most appropriate new technologies. Research programmes funded by Government departments make a very important contribution to policy formulation. Even though the outcome of the research itself cannot always be predicted, departments must be able to commission the right research, assess its quality, and use it effectively. The credibility of departmental policy-making generally will be undermined if individual policies are perceived to be based on poor, or the wrong science.

ODPM Statements

105. ODPM's Research Management Guidelines were accessible on the Departmental intranet and available upon request from ASCT. These documents provided guidelines for: the definition of research programmes (the *ROAME*⁵² Statement); producing a specification of requirements; collaborative projects; programme evaluation; and managing the acquisition and dissemination of scientific evidence. They also provided: model clauses for use in specifications of requirements; procurement and accounting processes; a project lifecycle checklist; a summary of intellectual property issues; indicative publishing times for research reports; and guidance on use of the Guidelines 2000/Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees within ODPM.

ODPM said that this existing guidance was considered to be out of date and that the planned revision of the guidance had been delayed following the recent organisational changes culminating in the formation of CLG. While some elements of the guidance were out of date, the broad principles underlying the guidance would be maintained.

106. ODPM's most recent Evidence and Innovation Strategy stated that the Department was

*"committed to excellence in analysis. We will ensure this through peer review of the analysis we undertake, through evaluation of completed analytical work projects and periodic reviews of our analytical work and evaluation programmes and how we procure and organise analytical work."*⁵³

and that assuring the quality of research outputs is one of the roles of internal contract managers, as well as Heads of Profession,⁵⁴ while the DCSA ensures the acceptability of external scrutiny arrangements.⁵⁵

⁵² ROAME: Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal, Monitoring, Evaluation.

⁵³ How we deliver: Background information for the ODPM Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005-2008.

⁵⁴ How we deliver: Page 7, paragraph 1.7 and page 16, paragraph 2.9.

⁵⁵ How we deliver: Page 10, paragraph 1.19.

107. The strategy document also recognises the importance of an:

“advisory process which allows decision makers access to a high quality and wide ranging evidence base..... In short we must ensure that key decision makers can be confident that:

- *evidence is robust and stands up to challenges of credibility, reliability and objectivity;*
- *the advice derived from the analysis of the evidence also stands up to these challenges; and that*
- *the public are aware, and are in turn confident, that such steps are being taken.”*

108. Between 2004-2005 ODPM let 88 analytical contracts at an average value of £103k⁵⁶ but this obscured considerable variation in the value of analytical contracts. The majority of analytical contracts let by ODPM were usually for less than £60k.

Evidence sought

109. The review sought evidence on: prioritisation of research and allocation of funds; how external research was commissioned and managed; on quality assurance and peer review processes within ASD and in those policy divisions that retained these responsibilities; and on the quality and relevance of the work undertaken by the department. The review also sought comment from key external stakeholders, including contractors and OGDs, regarding their experience of ODPM's project commissioning and management processes.

Findings

110. ODPM delivered its analytical work through its internal staff and through its externally commissioned work. In its E&I Strategy, ODPM had set out the resources it expected to use to deliver its analytical priorities for the period 2005-2008.

Science Budget

111. Traditionally, ODPM had funded analytical work both through its analytical programmes and through its policy programmes. For CSR 2004, ODPM's bids for its eight analytical programmes had reflected its initial assessment of the likely analytical priorities for the period 2005-2008. The bids were in line with ODPM's overall CSR'04 bid and had generally sought to maintain the baseline for each programme. They had been supplemented by bids from policy programmes specifically for monitoring and evaluation of policy and for work associated with the implementation of legislation. ODPM was considering the effectiveness of this approach for its CSR'07 bid.

112. The total funding of around £36 million for 2005/2006 was reduced from £42 million for the previous year mainly due to a reduction in policy-funded research. The spend from the analytical programmes was around £23 million and that from policy programmes around £13million. ODPM expected to maintain its analytical programme spend for 2006/2007 but the spend from policy programmes had yet to be decided.

⁵⁶ Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005-'08: How we deliver page 26, Annex B.

Governance

113. Until recently, ODPM had traditionally sought to maintain the base line funding of its analytical programmes. However, with the publication of its E&I strategy 2005-2008, it adopted a more focused approach by critically assessing its analytical requirements to support its strategic objectives. To this end, ODPM's analytical priorities were set out in its E&I strategy (see section 1) which provided the basis for the development of the Department's research and analytical programmes. The ASCT, located within ASD, played a key role in helping ODPM ensure that its research programmes and projects were prioritised to support the Department's 5-year plans and strategic goals.

114. In developing ASD's own analytical programme, the analytical needs of policy directorates were discussed between policy heads and the heads of analytical units based on the contents of the Project Information Form (PIF) or its equivalent. A key requirement of the form was the business justification for the project. The projects that were considered to be not contributing to business objectives or of lower priority, were not allowed to go through to the next stage which involved scrutiny by the ASCT. The other analytical programmes had a similar process.

115. Although analytical work supporting specific analytical programmes had different planning cycles, the prioritisation process normally started in January. ASCT requested heads of analytical units to put forward the list of projects, derived from their internal discussions and reviews, grouped under the strategic priorities or the Department's eleven key priorities. The review found that, groupings under the latter were the favoured approach but this was subject to change depending on Ministerial priorities. For example, since the Barker Review,⁵⁷ ODPM's priorities had shifted attention from the condition and quality of housing to the supply of housing and housing markets.

116. In prioritising, ASCT was informed by the E&I strategy, internal discussion documents including high level documents and the outputs of horizon scanning which could prompt additional thinking about priorities. In cases where research did not link up to one of the goals or priorities, ASCT held further discussions with relevant divisions to better understand how policy groups had analysed their needs to explore whether they could be better aligned with high-level goals. The prioritised programme was then put up to ASB for approval and subsequently to Ministers for final approval.

Box 2

Good practice

The Local and Regional Government Research Unit produced a formal annual stock take and strategy paper that described current local and regional government research, resources for the coming year, the overall strategy, work being supported by other funding bodies and possible new research projects. This paper was discussed at divisional manager and director level within ODPM. Projects were prioritised following this discussion, and the resulting programme sent out to external stakeholders for consultation. The finalised programme was then approved by the Director General and finally by the Minister. At this point the publication of a Research Newsletter identifying planned research and inviting expressions of interest would be considered. A mid-year consultation on the research programme was held with both internal policy customers and external stakeholders to review progress and discuss future research needs – thus setting in train the process for the following year.

⁵⁷ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/053/C7/barker_review_execsum_91.pdf

117. The peer review of ten projects commissioned by ODPM found that even in the absence of a clearly stated rationale it was apparent to reviewers how a project fitted with the research needs and priorities of ODPM.

Intelligent Customer Function

118. ODPM had a wide range of analytical specialists (see Section 10.) covering the diverse evidence streams on which it relied. Generally these specialists, in their role as project officers, were able to provide an intelligent customer function. ODPM actively encouraged them to acquire formal qualifications in procurement to complement their role as project officers, and this had been taken up by a number of analysts. However, a peer review of ten projects undertaken as a part of this Science Review revealed considerable variability in the effectiveness of the Department's intelligent customer function. In a significant number of cases there were shortcomings in the project objectives; they were either not wide enough or too narrow; and showed a lack of clarity in how objectives were set or the extent to which the Department had been involved in setting the objectives.

119. Furthermore, the case studies undertaken for the review highlighted instances where the Department was not able to adequately fulfil its intelligent customer role particularly on projects which required a multidisciplinary approach. The consequence of this was that the Department had to rely on contractors, in some cases large consortia, for the development of objectives as well as for the subsequent management of significant elements of the project. A further consequence was that, a large amount of funding was committed to a research programme related to a key PSA target without sufficient analysis and understanding of the issues it was expected to address. Moreover, responsibility for identifying and developing research proposals was entrusted to an advisory group whose members, largely made up of practitioners, were unlikely to have knowledge of wider research relevant to the issues. The Department's intelligent customer function was further undermined in some cases by:

- the failure of senior science managers to exercise effective stewardship of the studies; and
- insufficient engagement of policy customers to ensure the relevance of the work that had been undertaken.

One of the key findings of the Capability Review of CLG was that “project and programme management skills remain a crucial capability gap, particularly on project development.”

Commissioning new research

120. Commissioning of projects was normally triggered by one of the following:

- projects that were likely to respond to specific policy needs identified in ODPM's annual research programme;
- research proposals submitted to the New Horizons programme in response to identified themes (see criterion 2); and
- framework agreements.

121. The commissioning process started with the completion of the Project Information Form which principally enabled the project:

- to be justified for funding approval;
- outcomes and outputs to be recorded and the project's links to other areas of work.

122. Individual analytical programmes published details annually of work that ODPM planned to commission externally in their Programme Newsletters.⁵⁸ At the time of this review, the Civil Resilience research programme did not have a newsletter. Newsletters were made widely available to invite interest from a broad range of potential tenderers for those programmes without framework contracts.

123. Within ASD there was a process of discussion with Divisional Managers (DMs) in relation to the analytical support for their operational needs that occurred through the year. In addition, there was a more forward-planned process to identify analytical work (research questions) for the coming year. These involved discussion with DMs about the areas they were working on and discussions with: analysts working in the policy areas to identify gaps in the evidence base; external stakeholders; OGDs and the four research networks to explore their views on areas where ODPM's evidence base was weak.

124. Research questions were developed jointly with heads of policy units both for projects specific to a particular area and those that were of wider interest. ASD's central position and its role in the priority setting process, horizon scanning and the E&I strategy also informed this process. Analytical structures outside ASD tended to follow a similar process and there was also a significant amount of discussion with stakeholders especially on new directions that may need to be considered.

125. The Capability Review of CLG⁵⁹ noted that "in some parts of the Department there are good processes for commissioning data and research around services, places and customer satisfaction, and modelling interventions in complex systems such as local government finance."

ODPM's tendering process

126. The majority of analytical programmes used a competitive tendering process based on a 'Specification of Requirements' on an individual project basis. The specification stated the objectives, performance requirements and evaluation criteria, but left scope for the tenderer to propose an approach and method for achieving the desired outcome. Whilst not typical of the Department's management of science, the case studies highlighted instances when deficiencies in the Department's tendering practices had prevented it from ensuring an adequate level of competition in the selection of contractors. This unnecessarily restricted the expertise available to the department and, as independent external experts were not consulted, it was unable to confirm whether the contractors selected had the necessary skills and the right balance of expertise.

127. Competitive tendering was also used in the context of framework agreements that were used by the local and Regional Government Research Unit and Building Regulations research programme. New Horizons commissioned analytical work by inviting proposals on a selected list of broad themes that related to current policy issues and proposals were selected by an advisory panel comprising ODPM analysts. The Department had been considering the wider use of framework contractors as a way of increasing contractors' understanding of ODPM's longer-term requirements. Despite the potential benefits, the review found that opinion was divided on whether it would necessarily be the right approach for all the analytical programmes.

⁵⁸ http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_science/documents/page/odpm_science_037062.hcsp

⁵⁹ http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/capability_reviews/publications/pdf/Capability_Review_DCLG.pdf

128. It had been reported⁶⁰ that the Department appeared to be experiencing difficulties due to a lack of research contractor capacity with both the subject knowledge and the ability to deliver policy-relevant research and analysis to tight timetables. This was evident in two⁶¹ of the four case studies undertaken where large consortia had been engaged to conduct very costly studies. The case studies, including the Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities, revealed that although consortia were selected on the basis of reduced administrative costs, the output was sometimes of poor quality arising from: a lack of an adequate level of competition; poor control by the Department as a result of inadequate contractual arrangements and a lack of effective stewardship. However, the Department had subsequently put in place the resources and structures to address the weaknesses highlighted by some of these projects.

129. On the whole, external stakeholders felt that ODPM's procurement process was transparent and was well managed. However, there were some concerns that objectives were not always clearly defined and that contractors sometimes had to submit bids or complete projects within unrealistic deadlines which risked affecting the quality of outputs.

Monitoring

130. Monitoring was normally carried out by analysts, who kept policy customers informed through monthly reports on progress against specification at pre-determined milestones. This was a continual process that was carried through to the final report. At the end of the project, information about what worked well, the lessons that were learned and the impact of the work was lodged on the research management database.

Mobilising external funding sources and joint working

131. ODPM worked with a variety of organisations depending on the policy area and included OGDs as well as organisations such as the National Centre for Social Research. The Department recognised the need for more interdisciplinary research and preferred to participate in research programmes jointly with OGDs to address areas of common interest, rather than co-fund research. ODPM was actively engaged in some large cross-governmental research programmes such as those on ageing and migration and on construction (with DTI).

132. Working arrangements for collaborative research varied considerably. Sometimes ODPM contributed funding or support-in-kind to their work in return for a seat on the steering group. In some instances organisations adopted this approach or projects were developed jointly from conception and at other times either party could have bought into an already determined analytical project.⁶² Occasionally ODPM proactively sought partners and at other times the arrangements had resulted from ODPM having been approached by a third party. In particular, ASD proactively asked stakeholders for projects they might wish to commission as part of its programme development.

133. At an international level, ODPM maintained a close interest in the EU Sixth Framework Programme of research and had a commitment to facilitate, where appropriate, links between its own research and projects and programmes funded under the Framework Programme.

⁶⁰ Review of Analysis and Research in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – January 2005(not published).

⁶¹ Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities and the Affordability and Sustainability Studies to inform the Government's response to the Barker Review of Housing Supply.

⁶² DFT collaborations with Neighbourhood Renewal and with LGRU on regional regeneration.

134. On the whole, collaborative research with other organisations was not widespread in the Department but the following are examples where this had taken place:

Box 4

collaborative research

- A ‘New Horizons Programme’ project jointly funded by DWP, ‘Secondary Analysis of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing’.⁶³
- The Sustainability Impact Study of Additional Housing Scenarios that followed the Barker Review⁶⁴ jointly funded by Defra.
- The *Manual for Streets*. A key recommendation in the research report *Better Streets, Better Places: Delivering Sustainable Residential Environments*⁶⁵ produced in 2003 for ODPM, the Manual for Streets project was mainly managed by DfT, with assistance from ODPM.

Quality and Relevance of ODPM’s research

135. The common view on quality of research held by almost all analysts was that it should be fit for purpose, timely and joined-up. Key projects, including some that were jointly-funded, were normally guided by steering groups as well as academics. The steering groups, set up once a contract had been let, took responsibility for the direction of the research, ensured that it was relevant and commented on the quality of the outputs.

136. Peer review of research was not normally carried out by ODPM but there were pockets⁶⁶ in the Department which did it formally. Sometimes peer review was a requirement of the funding guidelines⁶⁷ and it was also used when innovation in statistics⁶⁸ was introduced; both the methodology and the resultant data were subject to peer review.

137. When peer review was carried out, the decision on whether to do so for specific projects was determined either by the relative cost of the study commissioned or considerations of the impact of using poor quality work to inform policy. The review found examples of good quality of analytical work which had been independently peer reviewed.⁶⁹

Box 5

Good practice

The study commissioned to inform the Government’s response to the Barker Review of housing supply, *Affordability Targets: Implications for Housing Supply* was a complex piece of work. Senior analysts were closely involved throughout the study which also benefited from the continual involvement of senior policy staff. The quality of the work was assured by three independent experts including two US academics.

⁶³ Carried out by the National Centre for Social Research, August 2005 to January 2006. Cost to ODPM: £25,000; cost to DWP: £9185. See <http://www.rmd.odpm.gov.uk/project.asp?intProjectID=12169>

⁶⁴ Science Review Case Study: Government’s response to the Barker Review.

⁶⁵ <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1148093>

⁶⁶ e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Social Exclusion Unit, Fire Research, and Local and Regional Government Research.

⁶⁷ e.g. the Mid-Term evaluation of the ERDF 2000-2006 objective 1+2 programmes in Yorkshire and Humber region Evaluation for which peer review was a requirement.

⁶⁸ e.g. the House Price Index which was peer reviewed by the Office of National Statistics during its development.

⁶⁹ e.g. *Affordability Targets: Implications for Housing Supply*.

138. Nevertheless the Review was surprised to note the absence of peer review arrangements on a major study commissioned by the Department.⁷⁰ In another significant study, the peer review was carried out by members of the contracting organisation thereby raising stakeholder doubts about the quality of the outputs resulting from the inherent conflict of interest. In some cases the undesirable consequence of not having peer review arrangements was compounded by the lack of effective stewardship of projects and insufficient involvement of policy customers. Failure to ensure the clarity and relevance of objectives as well as the rigour of the analysis had, on such occasions, led to errors which were taken forward to subsequent stages of the project and adversely affected the overall quality and relevance of the outputs.

139. Although the majority of externally-commissioned projects were individually not subjected to peer review, the Review noted that ODPM had arrangements in place for evaluating their collective effectiveness in meeting its evidence needs. It had scheduled⁷¹ a rolling programme of evaluations of its analytical programmes until 2010 of which the evaluation of ASD's analytical programme including Minerals and Waste Planning was scheduled for 2006-'07.

Box 6

Evaluation of the Building Regulations Research Programme – August 2004

This was an independent evaluation carried out by AEA Technology. The main objectives of the evaluation were to assess how research programme outputs had supported ODPM policy officers in the development of approved documents (ADs), how changes to ADs had supported government policy and how research programme outputs had helped industry and other stakeholders to understand and implement new requirements of the Building Regulations.

140. The Review carried out its own peer review of ten recent projects commissioned by ODPM which covered the different analytical disciplines and policy areas. The findings revealed that on the whole, the quality of the projects was variable and that there were several areas of weakness across all the projects.

141. While the methodologies used in most projects were up to date they were considered to be unnecessarily limited. A review of the analytical services⁷² in 2005 reported external stakeholders' concerns that the Department was reliant on a limited range of research methodologies, particularly the use of surveys. Because of this, some of the studies were not able to fully explore important issues which could have led to a deeper understanding and improved the quality of the analysis. The absence of a thorough literature review on most projects was noted and on the occasions when it was carried out, it had been limited by the scope of the project.

142. The findings reported above were reinforced by the four case studies that were undertaken as part of this Review to assess the effectiveness of use and management of science in ODPM. Two of these revealed⁷³ serious shortcomings in the commissioning of the analytical work and its subsequent management which adversely affected the overall quality of the project.

⁷⁰ First Phase of The Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities.

⁷¹ E&I Strategy 2005-2008 paragraph 1.19 page 10.

⁷² Review of Analysis and Research in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister January 2005 (unpublished).

⁷³ Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities and A Sustainability Impact Study of Additional Housing Scenarios.

Conclusions and Recommendations

143. The majority of ODPM's analytical work that was commissioned externally, was done through a competitive tendering process. However, the review found instances where there was either inadequate competition or it was not possible to determine the extent of competition in the tendering process. CLG should assure itself that its tendering processes consistently encourage sufficient competition, especially when projects are complex and / or inform key policy areas. Moreover, to ensure the transparency of its tendering processes, CLG should maintain adequate records to help reveal the processes that were followed to ensure competitive tendering. Where framework contracts were used, they appeared to be working well and CLG are considering the wider use of these arrangements.

144. There were clear governance arrangements within ODPM for prioritising its science, and its analysts generally provided an intelligent customer function in managing the research it commissioned. Nevertheless the review found that with regard to some major projects, the Department had not been able to adequately fulfil this function.

Recommendation 4:

CLG must assure itself that it has the necessary expertise to project manage and evaluate work, especially with respect to costly projects which influence policy.

Recommendation 5:

CLG should ensure that the development of its policies benefit from a balanced consideration of all relevant evidence streams by building on the changes introduced by ODPM to encourage this. To this end, and to derive maximum benefit from its commissioned research, CLG should consider establishing policy-facing multidisciplinary teams, including natural scientists, to support each of its policy sectors with the identification of its science needs.

Recommendation 6:

The Review welcomes CLG's ongoing revision of its Research Management Guidelines and recommends (see Section 3) that Project Information Forms:

- **request project officers to indicate the systematic literature review that has been carried out to identify the gaps that will be addressed by the project. (see recommendation 3)**
- **include a requirement for project officers to indicate how the project will be evaluated for its impact following completion.**

Recommendation 7:

The Review commends ODPM's commitment to peer review and to this end recommends that:

CLG sets up stepwise, scaleable peer review arrangements and develops and introduces the necessary guidance for it to be implemented consistently across the organisation. Peer review should be independent, preferably external and should include both peer input (ongoing discussions during the development of the project) and peer review (expert evaluation of the research or analytical activity).

Recommendation 8:

CLG should continue to ensure that those with the responsibility for the quality of analytical work exercise effective stewardship and that policy and delivery customers are actively engaged in order to ensure the relevance of analytical work.

6. Using Science and Scientific Advice

Rationale

145. Departments need scientific advice to underpin their policy making and regulatory activities. Such advice can be provided by external or internal experts, and/or informed by the output of research programmes commissioned by the department. There needs to be an effective communications bridge between the experts and the policy makers.

ODPM Statements

146. ODPM stated in its Evidence and Innovation strategy that:

“Analytical work is fundamental to policy making and operational delivery in ODPM. It feeds into defining outcomes, identifying and exploring the international context, monitoring and evaluating policies and their impacts and identifying ‘what works’.”

Evidence Sought

147. The review sought to establish: how well and to what extent analysis had been integrated into policymaking and advice; whether ODPM had any formal processes to encourage analyst/policymaker dialogue; and views on the extent to which departmental policymaking was evidence-based.

Findings

148. ODPM’s Analytical Strategy Board (a standing committee of its main Board) was responsible for ensuring that the Department’s policies were based on rigorous analysis and a robust evidence base by acting as champions for evidence-based policy making and delivery; and challenging the policy and analytical functions in terms of their understanding and use of evidence.⁷⁴

149. Furthermore, ODPM’s Chief Scientific Advisor played an influential role in ensuring that ODPM’s policy was soundly based on good science through active engagement at Board level and with policy officials and analysts.

150. The analysts embedded in the different structures within ODPM’s eight analytical programmes were responsible for advising policy colleagues on the implications of the evidence from research and analysis.

⁷⁴ Analytical Strategy Board: Terms of Reference.

151. Because policy-relevance was embedded in the priority-setting process for the annual research programme,⁷⁵ the review had found strong evidence that the identification of both internal and external research projects and the commissioning process for external research were closely driven by ODPM's policy needs. ODPM was using research commissioned by itself and others (e.g. OGDs, industry and international organisations) to:

- inform regulatory decisions;
- target interventions;
- support guidance and regulations;
- underpin advice given to Local Authorities on planning;
- monitor problems through surveys;
- monitor and evaluate policies and their impacts; and
- support its bids for the Government's spending reviews.

152. The review found several examples where completed analytical work was used to inform policy decisions. OGDs also identified instances where evidence provided by their departments had been used by ODPM:⁷⁶

- external stakeholders commented that they were confident that the evidence they had submitted in the consultation phase of the revision of the Building Regulations Approved Document B, was taken into account.
- research commissioned by the Arson Control Forum had fed directly into policy as well as Fire Service practice on the ground. The results of a piece of research informed the Fire Service's Strategy for Young People in relation to arson. In addition, a good practice guide commissioned for the Fire Services on how to work with young people drew on the results.
- the 'Affordability Study' undertaken by Government in response to the Barker Review of Housing was used at a Cabinet meeting in November 2005. Evidence from the study was used to highlight the implications for the affordability of homes if housing supply was not increased.
- the process involved in the revision of Planning Policy Guidance notes into Planning Policy Statements was directly informed by both internal and commissioned research.⁷⁷
- ODPM analysis influenced the widening of policy areas covered in the Northern Way Strategy for regional development in the north of England.⁷⁸
- routine survey data helped to shape the delivery of large programmes such as the New Deal for Communities.⁷⁹
- three 'daughter documents' published following the 2004 green paper, A Local Vision, would feed into a White Paper expected in 2006. All these documents made significant number of references to an ODPM -commissioned evaluation.

⁷⁵ See sections 4&5.

⁷⁶ The Manual for Streets (DfT); Use of analysis from DWP to inform ODPM's Cities Strategy.

⁷⁷ <http://www.dclg.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143802>(overview of planning policy guidance and statements)

⁷⁸ <http://www.thenorthernway.co.uk/>

⁷⁹ <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=617>

153. The case studies and the peer review of projects reinforced the findings above but also found instances⁸⁰ where shortcomings at the commissioning stage, the subsequent management of the project and time pressures led to results which could not be fully utilised. In some cases the lack of effective stewardship of projects and an over reliance on contractors arising from inadequate expertise within the Department led to outputs which were of limited value or lacked credibility.

154. Notwithstanding the Department's use of science and analysis across the breadth of its policy areas, the Capability Review of CLG found that the Department "has more to do to ensure that all its senior policy makers have the instincts and skills required to commission and make good use of evidence and data."⁸¹ Furthermore this review noted that "at all levels, effective internal challenge is still seen as a choice rather than a duty. Staff do not consistently see problem solving and risk mitigation as their prime responsibility here, sometimes focusing instead on reporting the current position."⁸²

155. ODPM analysts in 'bedded out analytical structures' reported varying levels of direct interaction with policy colleagues. In contrast, analysts embedded in policy divisions reported that they had a good understanding of how their work was being used to inform policy. Those in Building Regulations were able to point to a wide range of publications which drew directly on their analytical work.

156. The Review found that on the whole, ODPM was much more receptive to social and economic research results because these were consistently relevant to its objectives and it had the expertise to use them. For example, in its work relating to neighbourhood renewal, social exclusion, local and regional government and housing, ODPM was predisposed to drawing on socio-economic evidence. On the other hand, analytical work relating to building regulations, civil resilience, and fire research was predominantly driven by 'hard science'. The Review noted a significant perception among those outside the Department and among some internally, that ODPM may not have been sufficiently aware of the range of relevant science that it could have considered in the development of its policies or in the understanding of issues which required policy interventions.

157. Nevertheless, the Review found examples in parts of ODPM where there was growing awareness of the importance of considering evidence from a wider range of analytical disciplines. For example, analysts in Fire Research, Building Regulations and Civil Resilience, possibly prompted by events, actively sought to take account of the results of social research which they had not hitherto been aware of or had considered. Equally, analysts supporting policy relating to neighbourhood renewal had taken account of research on developments in information technology to inform their understanding of issues relating to social exclusion

158. Following the recommendations of an earlier review,⁸³ ODPM had introduced a significant change in order to encourage better integration of the evidence streams which it relied on to inform policy and to promote better interaction between analysts and policy makers. Within ASD, analysts from different disciplines who had traditionally served many different policy areas without much cross connectivity had been integrated within several multidisciplinary policy-facing teams.

⁸⁰ Segregation / polarisation; sustainability study.

⁸¹ Capability Review of CLG page 17.

⁸² Capability Review of CLG page 20.

⁸³ ODPM's review of its Analytical Services, January 2005.

159. The review also found evidence where parts of ODPM had proactively sought to access evidence from beyond their traditional areas. Fire Research, Building Regulations and Civil Resilience whose normal evidential base focuses on the physical sciences had recognised the importance and relevance of social science to their policy areas. These divisions actively sought to use physical science along with social science evidence available within ODPM and in other organisations to help inform the development of policies.

160. The ODPM research networks were intended to provide a source of analytical and academic expertise to ensure that analytical work and innovative methodologies were integrated into departmental thinking. However, the review found that the effectiveness of the networks in contributing to policy making had been mixed. The Review noted that the varying levels of effectiveness of these networks were too dependent on the lead contact in ODPM and therefore vulnerable to their departure. Some analysts within ODPM recommended that policy makers should increase the level of their interaction with the networks in order to improve their capacity to make use of this expertise (see section 10).

161. In addition to its research networks, ODPM had built on its good working arrangements with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) developed with the Council's Cities programme.⁸⁴ It had developed a close working relationship with ESRC to provide a network of urban researchers, set up as a joint initiative. Furthermore, the Department had close links with the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), formalised in Research Concordats (see paragraph 220).

162. ODPM was aware of the considerable amount of analytical work relevant to its needs being undertaken across government. However it was widely perceived both internally and by external stakeholders, that its links with OGDs tended to be ad hoc and not always at the right levels to help identify and exploit synergies. Moreover the Capability Review⁸⁵ reported that "the Department handles individual Government Offices inconsistently, and more clarity about what it wants from them in developing or delivering a particular policy would improve the intended outcomes."

163. The Review found that, on the whole, links with OGDs appeared to be somewhat better established than those across the boundaries of specific analytical programmes. There was a common view that research programmes appeared to be "running on parallel tracks without much attention being given to identifying shared interests or how research projects might be complementary."

⁸⁴ The programme aims to improve understanding of how cities develop and mobilise distinctive economic assets to secure competitive advantage, and how these processes impact upon and are influenced by social cohesion and environmental quality.

⁸⁵ http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform/capability_reviews/publications/pdf/Capability_Review_DCLG.pdf

Conclusions and Recommendations

164. CLG clearly draws on a wide evidential base and expertise to inform its policies. However, its access to expertise may sometimes not be sufficiently wide, resulting in difficulties with setting up advisory panels particularly for complex and multifaceted analytical activities.

Recommendation 9:

To enable it to draw on a wider pool of scientific expertise, CLG should aim to improve understanding of its needs among its diverse stakeholders by:

- **proactively communicating to key stakeholders and contractors how the results CLG research is used to inform policy to enable key stakeholders and contractors better understand the requirements of policy and respond effectively to CLG's requirements.**
- **encouraging the use of opportunities offered by policy announcements to communicate to research providers how evidence was used.**

and to develop and maintain effective links to sources of expertise by:

- **building on its existing collaboration with ESRC to make better use of expertise available in the UK and by using its concordats to strengthen its links with the Research Councils.**
- **assuring itself that it has proper mechanisms in place to develop and maintain regular communications with expertise in OGDs with which it has common science interests.**
- **making more use of European or international advisory mechanisms to involve experts from countries likely to have experience of the issues under consideration.**
- **maintaining the functions of its research networks within any new arrangements that might be introduced and, in particular, assuring itself that these networks are robust to the departure of key individuals and that analysts are given the access they need.**

7. Publishing results and debating their findings and implications openly

Rationale

165. In the spirit of openness, and to ensure robust interpretation of scientific findings and their policy implications, departments should publish and openly debate scientific findings.

ODPM Statements

166. ODPM's Publication Scheme⁸⁶ set out its commitments to make information on all aspects of its work as widely available as possible within the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2000. It set out ODPM's publication strategy in detail and for each class of information the scope, timing of release and cost implications.⁸⁷

Evidence Sought

167. The review sought to establish: the means by which ODPM published its findings and the extent to which this was done; stakeholder views of the effectiveness of ODPM's publication and dissemination; whether ODPM published and debated its research internationally; and the extent to which ODPM encouraged debate of its research.

Findings

Publication and dissemination

168. In order to meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, ODPM's policy was to publish details of all its research on its Research Management Database within six months of the expected date of completion. Increasingly, cost and efficiency pressures were compelling ODPM to move away from paper-based publishing to focus primarily on web-based publishing. Other important reasons for this approach were that it was aligned to the preferences of analysts and stakeholders and provided an incentive to ensure the quality of its research.

169. ODPM maintained a searchable Research database on its website which contained basic information on current projects and all projects completed after November 2002 that had been funded by the Department. Details of individual projects including reports were lodged in the research section of the specific policy area.

170. Despite ODPM's move to web-based publishing, the internal protocols for lodging reports on the website were seen as a barrier by some staff as it insisted on complicated formats which had sometimes been difficult for contractors to comply with. As a way of overcoming this difficulty, some divisions often resorted to using their contractors to disseminate the results of research. However this was generally not the preferred approach.

⁸⁶ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1141789>

⁸⁷ http://www.communities.gov.uk/stellent/groups/communities_about/documents/page/communities_about_600100.hcsp

171. Occasionally, ODPM also disseminated the results of its research across all its policy areas. Dissemination was frequently done through seminars to internal stakeholders where the focus had been on stimulating open debate. Results of analysis were routinely disseminated by analytical teams to relevant internal stakeholders through briefings and ongoing dialogue with their policy colleagues.

172. ODPM actively published the results from all its externally commissioned work and also produced a monthly analytical bulletin for in-house use that drew together results of research, generated by itself and others, for use by its policy staff.

173. The Review noted external stakeholders concerns about the difficulty they had in locating the research results of interest to them. They also felt that presentation and value of the research results would be greatly enhanced if the implications of the findings were also communicated.

174. Prompted by the differing needs of its internal and external stakeholders, ODPM had embarked on developing a new dissemination strategy. It was being undertaken as a part of its analytical change programme which had been triggered by the Department-wide 'Excellence in Delivery' programme aimed at continuous improvement. The strategy would cover all analytical units and focus on identifying target audiences and key routes for dissemination.

Debating findings

175. Although the Review found instances where the results of specific projects were proactively disseminated⁸⁸ and debated with key stakeholders, this practice was not widely adopted across the Department. However prior to finalising new policy, ODPM encouraged debate by publishing the drafts of the outcomes of new research.⁸⁹ External stakeholders were generally complimentary about the process for such consultations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

176. ODPM's dissemination of research findings via the Departmental website was systematic but proactive dissemination through other routes tended to be less common. A likely consequence of reliance on passive dissemination was that key stakeholders would be unaware of the research and more significantly, of its implications.

Recommendation 10:

In the interests of promoting debate on the results of research, CLG should:

- **include a brief statement of the implications of the results of research when they are published.**
- **continue to encourage good practice in proactively disseminating the results of research through events such as seminars and other channels appropriate to its target audiences.**

⁸⁸ e.g. City Growth and Governance Event – July 2005, NDC Evaluation Phase One.

⁸⁹ Revision of Building Regulation approved document B; Revision of Planning Policy Guidance (Review case study).

8. Sharing and Transferring Knowledge

Rationale

177. Knowledge transfer should be treated by departments as a strategic goal and enjoy high-level focus.

ODPM Statements

178. With regard to sharing and transferring knowledge, ODPM's Evidence and Innovation strategy stated:⁹⁰

*“Our primary customers are ODPM Ministers and policy colleagues”;
“there is a strong analysis-policy interface designed to transfer the knowledge created by analysis into innovation”; and
“sharing and dissemination of knowledge is key to delivery of innovation within and outside ODPM.”*

Evidence Sought

179. The review sought to establish: how ODPM promoted the transfer of knowledge from the research it funded – both internally and across government; how ODPM promoted the effective exploitation of the research it funded among stakeholders; and how such knowledge was managed and the nature of corporate memory within the department.

Findings

180. ODPM shared/transferred knowledge in a variety of ways both internally and with other bodies including OGDs. These took place through internal research seminars and individual networks. Nevertheless, sharing and transferring of knowledge was neither systematic nor co-ordinated within ODPM or between ODPM and other bodies. For the most part the Department was reliant on individuals' own professional networks across government and other organisations. The review noted broad support for knowledge transfer to take place through analysts' own networks than for it to take place through centrally prescribed routes.

Internal knowledge sharing

181. Internally, knowledge transfer took place through informal networks. In some cases, the intranet was used to communicate the interpretation of research to help explain changes in policy but in most cases it was done in the context of policy within the policy group.

⁹⁰ page 100, paragraph 4.1.

Knowledge sharing with external organisations

182. As part of its knowledge transfer activities ODPM involved stakeholders in the development of analytical programmes, in research networks, on its steering boards in joint projects, seminars and workshops. The review was given examples of ODPM analysts' participation in project steering groups⁹¹ of OGDs as well as identifying OGDs⁹² which had been represented on steering panels of ODPM's projects.

Box 7

Examples of good practice

A positive example of knowledge sharing cited by several respondents was a programme of events following the Framework for City Regions project carried out for ODPM in 2004 and led by the Universities of Salford and Manchester. A cross-departmental City-Regions Policy Workshop held in Croydon in January 2005 and attended by academics, national and regional policymakers was found by internal analysts to have generated dialogue between groups that would not otherwise have met. A further successful 'evidence review' event was held in July 2005 in London, on 'City Growth and Governance: Connecting the Local to the City-Regional'. Over 80 people from central government, local and regional government and academia attended this event. ODPM reported that this research informed policy development by complementing the 'State of the Cities' report on how cities and their regions were performing with analysis of how best to support and govern city-regional development.

An example given of international knowledge sharing was identified in the Arson Control Forum case study. A great deal of resource and effort has been invested in a national network of Arson Task Forces to help reduce arson at the local level. This approach originated in Massachusetts, USA. The Arson Control Forum introduced it initially in Tyne & Wear, based on the USA evidence base. Research into the effectiveness of the Tyne & Wear project then led to more widespread adoption.

Another example of where ODPM was reported to have shared and transferred knowledge well, was through its attendance at meetings of the housing research forum, run by Homelessness Link, at 6 monthly intervals.

⁹¹ Sure Start programme evaluation panel, JRF research advisory group, Countryside Agency Steering Group. Home Office Steering panel.

⁹² Defra, Home Office, DfT, National Youth Agency and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF).

Exploitation of research

183. External stakeholders generally welcomed ODPM's efforts to share and transfer knowledge from specific activities.

184. In its efforts to ensure that the results of its work were used by individuals and organisations to improve products, services and delivery mechanisms, ODPM had taken a number of steps. To encourage learning from evidence it introduced measures to help those involved in neighbourhood renewal to learn the reasons behind the success and failure of specific actions and to learn how to use evidence to inform interventions and measure progress. Some of these are listed below:

- an all-in-one website⁹³ for neighbourhood renewal providing national and local evaluations, reviews and case studies to contribute to evidence of 'what works', in a practical, user-friendly format.
- 'Floor Targets Interactive',⁹⁴ a tool which provides a data source and an interactive tool to help produce graphs and maps to track progress on how a particular area is performing on national floor targets.
- 'Neighbourhood Statistics'⁹⁵ – A project developed to help track progress at neighbourhood level. It also addresses ways to prevent deprivation – through identifying local areas that are at risk of decline.

185. Local authorities are key users of a range of good practice guidance relevant to their needs but they are also providers of data for many of ODPM's good practice guides and for ODPM's research. This often led to Local Authorities being involved in advisory groups for ODPM's research projects which had helped ODPM draw on their experience and understanding.

Knowledge Management

186. A recommendation⁹⁶ in ODPM's own review of its Analytical Services suggested that mixed discipline divisions to support policy directorates with their evidence needs should be set up to improve communications and promote integration of evidence streams relevant to specific policy areas. The recommendation was implemented a few months ago. The establishment of the Heads of Analytical Units was also expected to improve knowledge sharing across organisational boundaries.

187. At the time of this review, ODPM did not have any formalised systems for facilitating knowledge management. Many internal stakeholders reported they believed that there was a significant amount of valuable information within ODPM that they were unable to access as it was not codified but resided in individuals. They felt that useful information if not captured, or lost when individuals left the organisation, could leave the Department exposed to risk arising from gaps in knowledge or lead to unnecessary duplication of work.

188. An ODPM report⁹⁷ on the production and dissemination of guidance concluded that guidance was not being used by practitioners, either because they were inadequate or too general to be of value. To rectify this ODPM, with the help of an external contractor, had taken steps to producing guidelines on sharing and disseminating knowledge, publishing research findings, encouraging stakeholder engagement and promoting the evidence base.

⁹³ www.renewal.net

⁹⁴ www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/fti.asp

⁹⁵ www.communities.gov.uk/neighbourhoodstats.asp?pageid=39

⁹⁶ Recommendation 11 – Review of Analysis and Research in ODPM (unpublished).

⁹⁷ ODPM report: Improving Guidance and Research – 2004.

Conclusions and Recommendations

189. Within the Department there were no formalised systems to facilitate the management of knowledge relating to research, scientific advice and ongoing discussions on analytical work. To facilitate the sharing and retention of knowledge, CLG should consider innovative ways of how this might be achieved.

Recommendation 11:

As a starting point for systematically sharing knowledge, CLG should consider implementing an internal online management information system for all analytical work and research that is commissioned. Proposed and ongoing work across the organisation as well as the transparency of decisions would be visible to all. This would encourage both greater efficiency by reducing the risks of duplication and access to relevant evidence.

Recommendation 12:

Given the cross-cutting nature of its work, CLG should ensure that the results of its research are effectively communicated to all those who might be able to benefit from it, both within CLG and those in OGDs and other organisations. To this end, and to ensure that the results are accessible by all those who might benefit from it, CLG should:

- **develop a framework for effective knowledge transfer, drawing on good practice from the areas of the Department which are doing this successfully e.g. Social Exclusion Unit.**
- **communicate the results of research in a way that is appropriate to the needs of its target audience.**
- **exploit existing networks and also develop new ones such as those with OGDs (see recommendation in section 6) and use them in a systematic way.**

9. Implementing Guidelines and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees

Rationale

190. Guidelines 2005⁹⁸ is a high-level document aimed at the way Government departments obtain and use scientific advice in policy making. Its key messages are that departments should: think ahead and identify early the issues on which they need scientific advice; get a wide range of advice from the best sources, particularly where there is scientific uncertainty; and publish the scientific advice and all relevant papers. The Guidelines have been drawn upon in formulating the ten key criteria for the OSI Reviews.

191. The purpose of the Code of Practice⁹⁹ is to provide more detailed guidance specifically focused on the operation of scientific advisory committees and their relationship with Government and to help them translate the principles in the Guidelines into day-to-day practice.

ODPM Statements

192. In discussing the importance of risk assessment and horizon scanning in its Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005-2008, ODPM referred to the Guidelines on Scientific Analysis in Policy Making (2005). References to the Guidelines were also made in relation to ODPM's knowledge transfer activities and in its acknowledgement of the responsibility of the Department's Chief Scientific Adviser for ensuring that the principles of the Guidelines were met.

Evidence Sought

193. The review sought to establish: the level of awareness of Guidelines and the Code of Practice within ODPM and among stakeholders; the degree to which these documents were applicable; and how advisory fora in general were used to inform the Department's activities.

Findings

Implementation of the Guidelines 2005

194. Although the principles of the Guidelines are included in the ODPM Research Management Guidance, the review found consistently low level of awareness of the Guidelines on Scientific Analysis in Policy Making and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees. This was often reflected in the comments of reviewers on the quality measures used in the peer review of the ten projects selected for peer review (see sections 4 and 5). Nevertheless the review also found instances where analysts, although not aware of the Guidelines, recognised that the practices they had adopted were broadly in line with the principles of the Guidelines.

⁹⁸ OST. Guidelines on Scientific Analysis in Policy Making, October 2005. (Replaced: OST. Guidelines 2000: Scientific advice and policy making, July 2000.)

⁹⁹ OST. Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees, December 2001.

Thinking ahead and identifying early the issues on which scientific advice is needed

195. As part of its approach to risk management, ODPM encouraged horizon scanning across its analytical programmes and was aware of its growing importance. To help develop its ability to harness the benefits of horizon scanning it had taken steps to understand how horizon scanning was occurring across the Department.

196. As discussed in Section 2 (horizon scanning), ODPM engaged in horizon scanning through its New Horizons programme which was aimed at identifying trends and anticipating risks in its key policy areas. In its E&I Strategy it recognised the value of engaging in broader horizon scanning activities across government.

Cross-departmental issues

197. The Review found examples of where the Department had worked closely with OGDs such as DTI (on Building Regulations), Defra (on sustainability issues), DfT (sustainable communities and local government and the regions), DWP (Neighbourhood Renewal). Much of the relationships and communications were ad hoc and tended to be driven by the needs of specific projects. The Review also found that senior ODPM officials often sat on advisory panels of departments and high level boards such as that for Sustainable Development. Despite this, the Review did not find much evidence to indicate that there were formal mechanisms for the early identification of common issues or established procedures for the early provision and exchange of information.

Getting a wide range of advice from the best sources

198. As discussed in section 6 (Using scientific advice) and section 10 (Maintenance of scientific expertise), ODPM had access to a range of in-house experts through its various national networks, as well as through its representation in various international networks and committees. However, the peer review of projects suggested that the breadth of external input sought by the Department was sometimes limited. A case study showed that when sound evidence and advice covering a wide range of disciplines was required, ODPM had experienced difficulties in setting up an advisory panel with the right balance of expertise from that available in the UK. This reflected a need for the Department to establish wider contacts in order to access essential expertise which was limited or unavailable internally and in the country as a whole.

Publish scientific advice and all relevant papers

199. As discussed in section 7 (Publishes results and debates their findings openly), ODPM published all its research and information relating to it. However the publication appeared to be passive as the implications of the results of the research were not normally communicated. Nevertheless the Review found examples of good practice to openly debate the results of findings.

Peer review and quality assurance

200. While ODPM had well-established procurement and project management guidelines, peer review of research and other analytical work was carried out in a limited number of cases.

Key projects were guided by steering panels and advisory panels but, from the peer review of the ten projects carried out as part of this Review, it was not clear, how these panels had contributed or at what stages their advice had been sought. The case studies provided some evidence¹⁰⁰ of the effectiveness of a steering panel which helped shape the research in ways that were valued by both the contractor and the Department.

Code of practice for scientific advisory committees

201. ODPM had one official advisory group, the Building Regulations Advisory Committee (BRAC), whose role was to advise the Secretary of State on the making of Building Regulations in England and Wales and other connected subjects such as sustainability. BRAC was designated as a Scientific Advisory Committee under the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees, and was run according to the Code of Practice and OCPA¹⁰¹ and Cabinet Office guidance on the sponsorship of advisory NDPBs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

202. Although awareness of the Guidelines across the Department was low, overall ODPM's processes governing its analytical activities appeared to be broadly in line with its principles but this was patchy. A possible explanation for this could be the existence of guidelines that were specific to the different analytical disciplines but which shared many of the principles embodied in Guidelines 2005.

203. Specific issues relating to the different elements of the Guidelines have been addressed in the relevant parts of this Review.

Recommendation 13:

CLG should identify effective ways of ensuring that the principles of the Guidelines are embedded in the processes for managing and using its analytical work.

¹⁰⁰ Revision of Planning Policy Guidance – Case Study.

¹⁰¹ Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

10. Maintenance and development of scientific expertise

Rationale

204. Whether a department has its own dedicated research unit, or commissions work from outside organisations, it needs to ensure it has long-term access to experienced scientists who are able to understand and interpret issues at the science-policy interface, taking into account the full range of scientific opinion as appropriate.

ODPM Statements

205. In its document *How we deliver* accompanying its Evidence and Innovation Strategy, ODPM stated:

“The Office has a significant commitment to developing our analytical capacity through building links with the wider analytical work and analytical community. The Office recognises the important contribution of our own staff to science and innovation and invests in a continuous programme of training and skills development as well as keeping staff up-to-date with analytical issues and methodological advances to maintain our in-house capacity.”¹⁰²

Evidence Sought

206. The Review sought to examine: the deployment of scientific expertise accessed by the organisation; how ODPM ensured that scientific issues and advice were understood by its policy makers; how the professional development of ODPM’s scientific staff was ensured; and how ODPM supported the scientists it employed to maintain and develop their expertise.

Findings

207. Following on from the actions initiated by ODPM subsequent to its review of its analytical services, CLG recognised¹⁰³ that building its analytical capacity was central to its ways of working and change management necessitated by its creation in May 2006.

ODPM’s Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA)

208. The CSA was responsible for ensuring that the Department’s scientific activities were well directed and that its policies were soundly based on good science. He also acted as ‘intelligent customer’ for the ODPM Board interests in science issues and was extensively involved in supporting cross-cutting activities including the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Government’s Chief Scientific Advisers’ Committee. As the overall Head of Professions he delegated responsibilities to the Heads of Profession for each of the analytical disciplines in ODPM. Following his departure in January 2006 a new Chief Scientific Adviser was appointed in July following the creation of CLG.

¹⁰² How we deliver: Background information for the ODPM Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2005-2008 paragraphs 2.15, 2.16 p18.

¹⁰³ Building the Department for Communities and Local Government, Next Steps. paragraph 36, p11.

ODPM's scientific expertise

209. A large proportion of ODPM's analytical work was carried out and managed within specialist units covering social science, physical science, statistics, economics and operations research. Across all analytical units, ODPM had around 190 analytical staff to deliver both analytical work and externally commissioned projects. Over 60% of analysts were allocated to work which supported ODPM's Strategic Priorities 1 and 4, (see page 7) with 16% allocated to each of the Strategic Priorities 2 and 3.

210. The range of specialist analytical staff which was deployed by ODPM to support its wide evidence base was broken down as follows: social researchers (37%); statisticians (29%); physical scientists (17%); and economists (14%), with the remaining 3% comprising operational researchers.

211. Analysts were normally embedded in one of the three analytical structures in ODPM: in four multi-disciplinary policy-facing teams within ASD (this was recently introduced to encourage better integration of the evidence streams needed to support specific policy areas and to improve communication with policy teams); in teams where analytical work was closely integrated with policy as in Building Regulations; and in teams where analysts were co-located with the policy teams they supported.

212. Internally, ASD provided a central function of skills in economics and related expertise which is available to the rest of the Department. To promote awareness of the skills and expertise available internally, ODPM was encouraging the setting up of informal networks as well as cross-disciplinary networks.

Maintenance of scientific expertise in ODPM

213. The review noted that ODPM had fewer economists per £ spent than OGDs, notably DWP, DfT and Defra and that they were thinly spread across a broad area of its activities. As a result, some areas such as local government were at risk of being inadequately supported. The need for an increase in the cadre of economists was also recognised in a previous study.¹⁰⁴ In response to the findings of the Capability Review, CLG has stated that it plans to increase the number of its trained economists by 30 per cent in 2007 and at the same time ensure that all its analytical teams have economic expertise.¹⁰⁵

214. In almost all areas of ODPM's policies which were reliant on physical scientists, the review noted concerns about the possible consequences of the loss of skilled analysts arising from their retirement or other reasons. Although this was recognised as a business risk the review noted that the reasons for these concerns varied across the Department:

- the difficulty of attracting physical scientists due to the perceived lack of career opportunities;
- multidisciplinary content of some disciplines such as fire science for which there were no tailor-made courses thus affecting the supply of suitable individuals;
- no off-the-shelf solutions for replacing technical policy makers with skills developed over many years; and
- competition for skills from growing sectors such as construction.

¹⁰⁴ Recommendation 46, ODPM's Review of Analytical Services by Synergy Consulting January 2005 (unpublished).

¹⁰⁵ Capability Review of CLG page 7.

215. Although skills depletion in these areas was recognised by ODPM, it is not evident that there were any centrally-directed initiatives to address the issue through effective succession planning. Areas of ODPM where this was a problem were trying to develop their own innovative approaches. Subsequently, the Capability Review of CLG found that the capacity, knowledge base and alignment of its Human Resources (HR) function with the strategic needs of the Department required significant and urgent improvement. The review noted that the appointment of an interim HR director and an innovative business partnering approach between the HR function and the individual Groups were positive steps. It concluded that a sustained corporate focus and investment from the senior leadership team would be required to ensure progress towards a more systematic approach to developing and deploying staff, underpinned by professional expertise, to support the Department's policy priorities.¹⁰⁶

216. The supply side was also being affected by the demand for social researchers both within government and in the wider economy. However this was likely to be eased by the planned introduction of a fast-stream scheme for social researchers, similar to that for economists and statisticians across government.

217. In accordance with its commitment to developing its analytical capacity ODPM, through its Heads of Profession, encouraged its staff to develop and maintain their skills through formal courses as well as informal training opportunities. The development of analysts was normally addressed through the annual appraisal process and progress was monitored through regular meetings between staff and their line managers.

Maintenance of external capacity

218. In 2001, the Department had employed a senior academic on a three-year fixed term contract to help improve its links to external sources of expertise. This included setting up and co-ordinating the activities of the four research networks as a means of drawing on academic expertise in key ODPM policy areas: planning, housing, local and regional governance, and urban and neighbourhood studies. Each network was expected to: organise seminars on relevant topics, provide a valuable source of peer review expertise and act as a first port of call for identifying the right balance of experts on specific panels.

219. As a result of the varying degrees of success achieved by these networks, ODPM was planning to review the networks at the end of their contract period and consider replacing them with alternative ways of engaging academics who would act as advisers to ODPM and undertake short investigations.

¹⁰⁶ Capability Review of CLG, December 2006, page 16.

220. ODPM encouraged its analysts to draw on advice from a range of external experts in addition to that provided by the research networks. To this end ODPM supported the building of longer-term capacity in the academic community in disciplines that supported its evidence base. In addition to the joint initiative with ESRC to set up a network of researchers (see paragraph 161), CLG has also established a joint Postdoctoral Fellowship and Research Studentship scheme with the Council to enhance research capacity. The scheme aimed to enhance analytical capacity, encourage medium to long-term thinking to anticipate new policy issues and identify opportunities and solutions. Through this scheme, ODPM expected to develop high-calibre analysts capable of working with policy makers and presenting information in the context of policy. The funding included provision for regular contact between award-holders and the Department with the opportunity for involvement in its policy agenda.

Conclusions and Recommendations

221. Although ODPM's analytical work relied heavily on social science, economics and statistics, many of its policy areas needed to draw on its analytical resources involving physical sciences and engineering. CLG needs to strategically review the balance of its available analytical expertise in order to ensure that it can effectively respond to its changing requirements.

222. CLG needs to recognise and address the significant challenges in recruiting, developing and maintaining its capacity in the physical sciences, perhaps more so in some areas than in others. Gaps in such expertise will impact on CLG's ability to draw on the widest relevant evidence especially for developing policies where the physical sciences clearly have a role in informing policy.

Recommendation 14:

To avoid the undesirable long-term impact of a gradual depletion of its scientific expertise, CLG needs to increase its efforts to maintain and develop its capabilities in the physical sciences. In particular the Review recommends that CLG:

- **plans for and ensures the career development of scientists, especially those who bridge the gap between science and policy expertise, in line with the Professional Skills in Government Initiative; and**
- **explores innovative ways of maintaining access to scientific capability both through recruitment and expertise accessed externally.**



Steering Panel Members

Sir David King, Government's Chief Scientific Adviser – Chair

Dr Brenda Boardman, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford

Professor Michael Clarke, University of Birmingham

Sir Ron Cooke, Joint Information Systems Committee

Andrew Dilnot, University of Oxford

Professor Dougal Drysdale, University of Edinburgh

Sue Duncan, Chief Government Social Researcher

Peter Head OBE, Director, ARUP

Professor Gordon Marshall, University of Reading

Professor Richard Munton, University College London

Professor John Swaffield, Heriot-Watt University

ODPM / CLG representatives attending and participating in the Panel meetings:

Professor David Fisk, ODPM Chief Scientific Adviser

Michael Kell, Head of Analytical Services Directorate

Professor Michael Kelly, CLG Chief Scientific Adviser

Peter Unwin, DG, Corporate Delivery

OSI Review Leader and Steering Panel Secretary:

Arup Kar

Lead Consultants from Momenta

Peter Craigon

Dr Joanne Mackenzie

Dr Sarah Macnaughton

Alan Mercer

Dr Paul Rosen



External Stakeholder Consultation

Summary

223. In August 2005, a consultation document was sent to over 300 ODPM stakeholder organisations, which included local government, non-departmental public bodies, other government departments and members of the research community.

224. In total, we received written evidence from 18 organisations and a further 83 organisations informed us that they were unable to contribute to the Review. As the number of organisations which provided written evidence was lower than expected, face-to-face interviews were also conducted with senior staff of 22 organisations, covering the broad range of ODPM's stakeholders, which had been invited to contribute but all of which, except one, had not responded.

225. These organisations as well as those which provided written evidence are listed below. A list of the written responses from external stakeholders is provided at Annex 6. Submissions of evidence from those organisations that have not requested their response be kept confidential will be posted on OSI's website at:

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/science/science-in-govt/works/science-reviews/review/clg/page24794.html>

Organisations providing written evidence to the ODPM Science Review

British Geological Survey

Building Research Establishment

Building Research Establishment (BRE) Certification Ltd

Centre for Local Economic Strategies

City of Bradford

Commission for the Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)

DTZ Pbeda Consulting

Government Office for the North West

Government Office for the South West

Leeds Metropolitan University

Middlesex University Business School

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA)

Scottish Executive

The Chartered Institute of Wastes Management

The Fire Brigades Union

University of Liverpool

University of Salford

Organisations interviewed

Building Research Establishment (BRE)

Construction Industry Research and Information Association

Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

Department of Transport (DfT)

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC)

English Partnerships

Government Office for London

Home Office (HO)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Local Government Association

National Community Forum

ODPM Research Networks – Housing

Local and Regional Governance

Planning

Urban and Neighbourhood Studies

Shelter

University of Durham (Centre for Study of Cities and Regions)

University of Newcastle (Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies)

University of Salford (Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures – SURF)



Peer Review Exercise

Summary

226. In order to assess the quality and relevance of a department's scientific work, it was decided that science reviews should include an external peer review (looking both at the quality and fitness for purpose) of a sample of a department's work.

227. Ten recent projects were selected from ODPM's research management database¹⁰⁷ for external peer review against criteria established for OSI's Science Reviews which was endorsed by the Steering Panel for the ODPM Science Review. The projects were selected to reflect the range of work ODPM had undertaken and commissioned, as well as to ensure a mix of size, cost and analytical disciplines. Four of the projects chosen were on the basis that each of them contributed to the evidence base for one of the case studies undertaken as part of the science review of ODPM.

228. The peer review of the selected projects revealed that on the whole the quality of the projects was variable and that there were several areas of weakness across most of the projects. Nevertheless the peer review also identified a couple of projects which were judged to be of good quality and the results of these were used by the Department and also disseminated widely.

229. Virtually all the projects were supported by a clearly stated rationale but in some of these cases it was less clear whether the rationale was valid. Although reviewers were able to link most of the projects to a departmental priority even when the rationale had not been stated, its validity when stated could be questioned on the grounds that there had been no consultation with external experts. While project objectives were clearly stated in most cases, reviewers commented that they could have been better framed to adequately address the needs of the Department and with due regard to the given timescales.

230. The majority of projects were considered to have used methods that were up to date or were appropriate for the type of study that was undertaken. But there was a significant minority where better methodologies might have been used. On almost half the projects, reviewers commented that adherence to certain methodologies either prevented an exploration of relevant issues of importance to ODPM, understanding of underlying mechanisms or a rounded evaluation of relevant material which would have improved the quality of the research.

231. For the majority of projects, reviewers consistently commented that there was no evidence of a systematic or thorough literature review and, in cases where this was done, it was limited by the scope of the project.

232. On the whole, the studies commissioned broadly responded to the project specifications and met the stated objectives.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.rmd.communities.gov.uk/>



Case Study Summaries

233. Four case studies were chosen to generate detailed information on how ODPM's science operated in practice against all the ten review criteria. The case studies were chosen in consultation with the Steering Panel and ODPM and the fieldwork was carried out by Momenta. An important factor in the selection of the topics chosen:

- Revision of Planning Policy Guidance
- The Government's Response to the Barker Review on Housing Supply
- Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme
- Arson Control Forum

was that they should aim to cover the broad range of ODPM's areas of interest.

234. The enclosed notes summarise the main findings from the case studies. Detailed information on the case studies is provided in the individual Annexes 2-5 (available on the OSI website at: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/science/science-in-govt/works/science-reviews/review/clg/page24794.html>)

235. The findings from the case studies have been used in the main report in support of the Review's findings, recommendations and conclusions.

Revision of Planning Policy Guidance

(see Annex 2)

236. National planning policy is contained within a series of 25 documents published until the early 2000s as Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPG). These notes (and their replacement documents designated as Planning Policy Statements) have to be taken into account by planning authorities when preparing development plans, and they can count as 'material consideration' in determining individual planning application appeals.

237. Plans to streamline the PPGs, by limiting their content to policy, flowed from the Government's proposals to deliver a fundamental reform of the planning system. The process by which PPGs are revised is not uniform especially with respect to whether evidence is needed to support the revision of the PPG and the means by which the evidence is gathered. PPG6 on *Town Centres and Retail Development* was one of the first PPGs to be revised, because of the need for greater clarity and a fuller statement of Government policy.

238. Since the laissez-faire approach to out-of-town retail development reflected in the first publication of PPG6 in 1988, the guidance underwent subsequent revisions to take account of the growing concerns about the impact of such developments on the vitality and viability of town centres. These revisions ultimately led to a version of PPG6 which required local and regional development plans to take a strategic approach for identifying major new development sites. The Government's Green Paper on Planning and a series of Ministerial statements to clarify parts of the guidance were seen as the main drivers for the revision of PPG6 along with the need to incorporate Government policy within a single document, the Planning Policy Statement.

239. The case study focuses on the Policy Evaluation of the Effectiveness of PPG6: its commissioning and management, and the ways in which the Evaluation's findings and recommendations fed into the subsequent development of the new policy statement PPS6.

240. The findings of the case study were somewhat constrained by a combination of factors; particularly staff involved in the commissioning and management of the evaluation had moved on and the lack of archived documentation relating to the project.

241. Nevertheless this review found that there were significant weaknesses in the commissioning and management of the Evaluation. This raised concerns about the quality of the evidence, the way in which it was gathered and what, if any, use was made of the different forms of evidence and the weighting that was attached to them. In particular the extent to which existing evidence was used was not apparent and the review of the existing evidence itself was somewhat limited. Moreover the lack of adequate quality control processes and the absence of external scrutiny of the evidence left the evaluation open to challenge.

242. The review also found that the publication of the evaluation after the publication of the Consultation Draft of PPS6 prevented debate of the findings which could have informed the development of PPS6. However, frank and open debate of PPS6 itself was actively encouraged by the Department.

The Government's Response to the Barker Review

(see Annex 3)

243. The Government was required to respond to the recommendations of an independent review of housing supply which was jointly commissioned by the Chancellor and the Deputy Prime Minister in 2003. The review itself was prompted by the publication of the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan (Sustainable Communities: Building for the future) and a recognition of the growing demand for housing. The review was not required to address the environmental implications of increasing house building. Nevertheless the House of Commons Environment Audit Committee noted that the Government's evidence base for housing policy was inadequate and advised Government that the environmental impact of housing needed greater consideration.

244. A subsequent study to assess the environmental impact of housing recommended that "*further work should be undertaken to understand more fully the environmental and sustainability implications and regional impacts of the different levels of growth postulated in the Barker Review and the assumptions on which they are based.*" This recommendation and a recognition of the need for a sound evidence base to inform decisions on future housing supply, ODPM commissioned two major studies: Affordability Targets: Implications for Housing Supply (The Affordability Study), and A Sustainability Impact Study of Additional Housing Scenarios in England (The Sustainability Study). The studies were commissioned to provide an evidence base to build a forecasting tool to model the impact of changing housing supply on affordability and sustainability for the next thirty years.

245. The case study focuses on the commissioning and management of these two studies with reference to the ten review criteria and their use in the Government's response to the Barker Review. There were marked differences in the commissioning and management of the studies as well as in the subsequent use of the results that emerged.

246. The affordability study was carried out within a tight timescale and dealt with a wide range of complex issues. The research, which was recognised as groundbreaking, had close involvement of senior analysts and continual involvement of senior policy staff. The quality of the study was assured by three independent experts including two US academics.

247. In contrast, there were shortcomings in the commissioning and management of the Sustainability Study which collectively contributed to undermining the quality of the study and limiting its usefulness to policymakers. In particular, the failure to ensure an adequate level of competition and the Department's apparent inability to fulfil its intelligent customer function led to the selection of a consortium which lacked the necessary breadth of expertise and on which the Department was over reliant on key aspects of the project.

248. As ODPM's knowledge of the issues surrounding sustainability was not fully developed, the Department was reliant on contractors for drawing up the specification for the study based on the results of a scoping study which they had been asked to carry out. Moreover the specification which was subsequently developed could have benefited from a more thorough review of the existing science and a deeper level of engagement with Defra which had co-commissioned the study.

249. A number of problems collectively contributed to undermining the overall quality of the study and limiting its usefulness: problems arising from the need to manage a large consortium, the cumulative effect of errors not identified in the early stages of the project, the change of specification whilst the study was underway and the failure to take sufficient account of the outputs of the related Affordability Study due to the lack of time.

Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme

(see Annex 4)

250. New Deal for Communities (NDC) is a £2 billion, 10-year programme in the Government's strategy to tackle multiple deprivations in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The programme aims to narrow the gap between these neighbourhoods and the rest of the country with respect to levels of employment, crime, and standards of health, education and housing.

251. The programme has its origins in the Social Exclusion Unit's (SEU) 1998 publication, *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*. The strategy highlighted a number of Area-Based Initiatives (ABI) one of which was the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme for developing and implementing local community-based partnerships covering the key issues which affect communities and their wellbeing. The NDC was launched as a £2 billion programme over 10 years with its first phase funded to £800 million over three years. The strategy also introduced a co-ordinated programme of policy development across Government an output of which was the publication of *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: A National Strategy Action Plan*. The document highlighted the establishment of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit to lead on the implementation of the strategy which included running the NDC.

252. Between the publication of *Bringing Britain Together* and *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*, DETR (ODPM's predecessor department) commissioned a review of the evidence base for the regeneration policy and practice. A conclusion of this review was that, due to the lack of adequate funding, research programmes which could improve the quality of the evidence could not be carried out. As a result, previous ABIs had been criticised for the lack of learning from experience and were viewed as having failed to engage in a wider debate on how to achieve neighbourhood renewal. The review therefore recommended the allocation of programme funds to the evaluation of ABIs. It was expected that learning and innovation would be central to NDC and would contribute to the wider evidence base for neighbourhood renewal. This provided the basis for the evaluation.

253. The evaluation of NDC was split into three phases: a scoping study completed in 2001; a first phase evaluation of the programme covering 2001-2005 and final phase to cover 2006-2009 and possibly extended to coincide with the end of the programme in 2011. Around £18 million of the overall £27 million budget for the evaluation (1.25% of the total funding for the NDC Programme) was allocated to the scoping study and the first phase evaluation and a significantly lower sum around £9 million for the final phase.

254. Given the substantial sum of money allocated to the first phase of the evaluation there was a surprising lack of adequate competition at the commissioning stage. A consequence of this was that the range of expertise within the consortium that led the evaluation was not sufficiently wide to deal effectively with the complexity of the task. This was compounded by the consortium leader's responsibility for the co-ordination and management of the work of sixteen different organisations which presented considerable challenges for ensuring the timeliness and quality of the outputs.

255. The sheer volume of data generated by the first phase of the evaluation led to the production of around 100 reports which were difficult to analyse within the timescales set. The limited analysis of the available information, partly due to the lack of appropriate expertise within the consortium, undermined the overall quality and usefulness of the outputs. In particular the analysis fell short of answering key questions about the effectiveness of specific interventions and the economic impact of the programme.

256. As a result of the lessons learned from the experiences of the first phase of the evaluation, ODPM had put in place processes that would help ensure the effective management of the second phase of the evaluation.

Arson Control Forum

(see Annex 5)

257. The Arson Control Forum was established in 2001 following a recommendation made in the Home Office report, Safer Communities towards Effective Arson Control: The report of the Arson Scoping Study. The purpose of the study was to provide Ministers with a snapshot of the arson problem in England and Wales, identify arrangements for controlling the problem and point to current examples of success to inform future approaches.

258. The Forum includes stakeholders such as the Fire and Rescue Service, local authorities, the police service, insurance companies and Government. It was set up to guide the Government's policy to reduce deaths, injuries and damage caused by arson. The role of the Forum has always been to advise and influence how government's money is spent in the fight against arson. It is used as an advisory group which focuses on: debating issues relating to arson; the need for improved data sharing between stakeholders; developing good practice and rolling this out.

259. The aim of the case study was to review the processes within ODPM's management of science in relation to the Arson Control Forum. For clarity, the term Arson Control was used in the cases study to refer to the government's arson policy which funded both research and the implementation of anti-arson projects. The Forum was used to refer specifically to the group of stakeholders who attended meetings and their influence on Arson Control.

260. The case study focused on how the Arson Control Forum used analysis to support the formulation of its overarching goal and its subsequent use of analysis to commission projects to work towards the goal. In particular it covered its review of existing science to identifying gaps to inform the commissioning of research. It also looked at how the results of these commissioned projects were communicated amongst the members and how they were used to inform future research and ODPM's policy making decisions.

261. The findings highlighted the limited use of scientific analysis to adequately understand the causal effects of policy interventions and wider socio-economic factors. In particular there was no evidence to suggest that opportunities offered by cross-national comparative analysis, which could have led to a better understanding of the problem of arson, had been fully exploited. Moreover, research to explore arson prevention and detection in relation to wider fire prevention focused primarily on social science issues. The absence of scientific expertise in The Forum was likely to have contributed to the lack of consideration given to the physical sciences. Its failure to take account of the physical sciences and advances in fire science limited the evidence that could have been used to consider how the incidences of fire and the resulting damage could be minimised. Moreover, the role of The Forum and its ability to influence the broad analytical strategy as well as its involvement in the selection of bids was not clear.

262. The commissioning process revealed a lack of good practice in that a sole individual was involved in the commissioning, analysis and evaluation of all research in a particular area. This diminished the opportunities for peer review and increased the risk of systematic errors creeping in as projects progressed. However the Review found that lessons learned from difficulties encountered on some projects had subsequently led to the practice of setting up an advisory group to oversee the conduct of each project and ensure its satisfactory conclusion.

263. Given Arson Control's dual role, prior to April 2006, of funding arson related research and the funding of arson reduction initiatives informed by the research, the review found examples of the use of science to inform policy.

264. Arson Control used a number of channels, including The Forum, to disseminate the results of its research in the form of full research reports and shorter research bulletins. The principal mechanism used by Arson Control for sharing and transferring knowledge was the annual good practice conferences which provided opportunities for debating the results of research and enabled arson practitioners to share their experiences of anti-arson initiatives and transfer good practice.



Acronyms

ABI	Area Based Initiatives
AD	Approved Documents
ASB	Analytical Strategy Board
ASCT	Analytical Strategy and Co-ordination Team
ASD	Analytical Services Directorate
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CSA	Chief Scientific Adviser
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
Defra	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department for Environment Transport and Regions
DfT	Department for Transport
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
E&I	Evidence and Innovation
ELSA	English Longitudinal Study of Ageing
FOI	Freedom of Information
HR	Human Resources
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
LGRU	Local Government Research Unit
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NHP	New Horizons Programme
OCPA	Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OSI	Office of Science and Innovation

PIF	Project Information Form
PPG	Planning Policy Guidelines
PSA	Public Service Agreement
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
S&I	Science and Innovation



Glossary

Term	Definition
Aims	High-level, strategic objectives
Appraisal	Review [proposals for] a piece of work prior to its being started, when deciding whether to proceed
Benchmarking	A continuous, systematic process for evaluating the products, services, and work processes of organisations that are recognised as representing best practice for the purpose of organisational improvement
Best practice	A comprehensive approach to continuous improvement across all facets of an organisation's operations
Capacity / capability maintenance	Maintaining sufficient capacity / capability in the organisation to ensure that its science needs can be adequately addressed
Evaluation	Review of a piece of work – in most cases ex-post, i.e. after completion
Horizon scanning	The systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities and likely future developments, which are at the margins of current thinking and planning. Horizon scanning may explore novel and unexpected issues, as well as persistent problems and trends. Overall, horizon scanning is intended to improve the robustness of policies and the evidence base
Knowledge transfer	The process by which knowledge and ideas move from the knowledge / science
Monitoring	Assessment / management of a piece of work while it is being done
Outcome	What happens as a result of a piece of work, e.g. economic or social benefits to the UK
Output	The product(s) of a piece of work, e.g. reports
Peer review	Assessment of research proposals and outputs by peers
Policy	The translation of Government's political priorities and principles into programmes and courses of action to deliver desired change (including regulation)
Policy maker	A person or organisation charged with assisting a decision-taker in reaching a decision by providing policy analysis, generating policy options or by conducting risk assessment

Term	Definition
Programme	A set of organised but often varied activities (projects, measures or processes) directed towards the achievement of specific operational objectives
Project	A single, self-contained piece of work with fixed timescale and dedicated budget
Rationale	The reasons for supporting an activity, e.g. social or economic benefits
Research	The systematic study directed toward fuller scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject studied
Science	For the purposes of this Review, science encompasses all branches of science including social and economic, natural, life and physical science, research, data collection, and monitoring <i>Natural science</i> deals with the physical world, e.g. physics, chemistry, geology, biology <i>Social science</i> deals with the study of society in general, the factors motivating behaviour of humans within society, and the results of such behaviour, e.g. economics, psychology and sociology <i>Life science</i> deals with the science of life and living organisms, e.g. zoology, ecology, physiology <i>Physical science</i> deals with the study of inanimate natural objects, e.g. physics, chemistry
Stakeholder	A person or organisation representing the interests and opinions of a group with an interest in the outcome of (for example) a review or policy decision
Targets	Activities (usually measurable) whose achievements will indicate that objectives are being met

