




Regulation & Inspection
Thematic studies

SERVICES FOR GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS EQUALITIES IN PRACTICE

EVALUATION SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the evaluation exercises carried out following the completion of our two thematic studies on 'Services for Gypsies/Travellers' and 'Equalities in Practice' in 2002. This evaluation should therefore be read in conjunction with the summary reports on these studies.



Evaluation summary

Why carry out an evaluation?

Regulation & Inspection is committed to consulting stakeholders to inform the continuous improvement of our work. We value the input by case study organisations to these studies, and value the opinion of staff who were involved in the process. We have taken account of their experience of the process, and we will use this feedback to inform the ongoing review of our inspection guidance and processes.

We are open and transparent about our work, our own performance and our regulatory processes. In addition to this summary, full reports on the evaluation of the two studies are available on our website, www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk.

How did we evaluate the studies?

Following both the studies, we sent out questionnaires to all the organisations involved. We received seven completed forms from the councils involved in the Gypsy/Traveller study and a total of 14 completed forms from organisations that took part in the Equalities in Practice study.

We also carried out a number of evaluation workshops to allow people involved to feedback to us in more detail. Two sessions held after the Gypsy/Traveller study were attended by nine staff members from four case-study councils. The Equalities in Practice study was followed up with three evaluation sessions, attended by 13 members of staff from eight case-study organisations.

What did people tell us?

We asked people to give us feedback on the three key phases of our studies; the planning stage, visits to the case study organisations and reporting back. The feedback we received was constructive and helpful.

Planning and setting up the case study

In setting up case studies we gave organisations information about their purpose and our planned approach. Almost all the respondents were clear what the thematic study was about and why it was being conducted. Everyone agreed that they were provided with enough information about what Communities Scotland would be doing and what their individual involvement would be.

Where initial briefing sessions were carried out with staff they were found to be very useful and encouraged information sharing and allowed staff to raise questions about the process prior to the on-site visit.

For all case studies, we agreed a schedule for carrying out the visit to the organisation. The vast majority of staff found the arrangements for their involvement in the study to be either very reasonable or 'OK'. Only one respondent did not find the arrangements to be reasonable, but the reason given for this was delays in communication within their own organisation.

Case study organisations were asked to provide a range of briefing material prior to the on-site phase of the study. All agreed that we asked for the right information, and all but one council found it easy to pull the information together. In addition, all but one council felt that we asked for the right amount of material.

We asked respondents if they had any suggestions about how this initial stage of the process could be improved. The two suggestions for possible improvements were, to contact staff directly to arrange meetings, and to provide a longer lead in time. We intend to address these points as stated below.

On-site

All case study respondents confirmed that Inspectors followed the Code of Conduct agreed at the start of the process.

Nearly all questionnaire respondents agreed that we spoke to the right people. The fact that we involved a range of staff members, including frontline staff, was appreciated and thought to have added value to our assessment. A few people suggested that we could have spoken with more service users. (We did speak to over 40 residents on 15 Gypsy/Traveller sites. And during our Equalities in Practice study we tested potential scenarios with frontline staff to give us an indication of the quality of service tenants might receive.) Unfortunately time restraints did not allow more widespread consultation during these studies. However, we are fully committed to consulting service users during future inspections.

All but one of the questionnaire respondents felt that Inspectors made appropriate use of the briefing material provided in advance of their visit. The majority agreed that we then spent the right amount of time looking at the right areas, and all but one felt we asked the right questions in relation to our assessment. The feedback provided to the organisations during the case studies was also felt to be helpful and relevant.

Report of findings

Following each case study, the participating organisations were given a draft report on findings. This allowed them to highlight any factual inaccuracies and to comment on our findings. The vast majority felt that we took on board their comments when we finalised the case study reports.

All the Equalities in Practice case study drafts were thought to be accurate, although one respondent felt their report was only 'partially accurate'. One organisation specifically stated the draft was "a good assessment of the council's position". Similarly, all of the drafts reports for the Gypsy/Traveller study were considered to be either fully accurate or partially accurate. In all cases except one, it was felt that comments provided on the draft report were taken fully into account in the final report. Overall, positive views were expressed on the key findings in the draft reports, with individual comments indicating they were "fair and constructive", "accurate" and "useful".

All but three respondents felt that the report clearly explained the reasons for assessments made and we provided evidence to support these. Others suggested we had done this in part. Likewise, only two organisations found their draft reports to be partially clear on where improvement is needed, with the vast majority finding the report to be clear on this.

Only a few minor suggestions were received about how the report format and structure could be improved, and we will take these on board.

General comments

We asked organisations to highlight any suggestions about how the case study process overall could be improved or whether they would like us to provide more information

A few participants expressed a concern about the wider issue of the resource implication of inspections. We are committed to ensuring that our scheduling is focused, limiting the time that staff members involved in inspections are away from their work.

A number of participants in the evaluation made a request for good practice examples as a result of the studies. The inclusion of good practice examples within the summary reports of both studies was welcomed, as was our commitment to publish good practice collected through future inspections.

Evaluation summary

What will Regulation & Inspection do with this evaluation?

We learned a great deal from this evaluation exercise, and intend to use the feedback to confirm or improve our regulatory processes.

Prior to any inspection we will make information available to inspected organisations through published Performance Standards, and the associated Guide to Inspection.

At the planning stage, we will make sure we communicate effectively with the organisation to be inspected. Visits will be scheduled in accordance with our published Inspection Programme and Procedures. We will provide adequate notice and schedule visits where possible to take account of other commitments.

This evaluation suggested that we took the right approach to briefing in terms of the type and amount of information asked for. This feedback will be used to confirm our inspection procedures.

Once on site we will continue to make effective use of briefing material.

The evaluation highlighted that we took the right approach to identifying staff members to speak with. It was extremely valuable to us to involve staff throughout organisation, and we will incorporate this approach throughout our regulatory inspections.

We will balance the need to collect evidence, with need to limit time with staff and be aware of other commitments. We will aim to cover all appropriate areas and speak to a range of staff, but we will also try to avoid duplication.

We will use a range of assessment techniques such as interviews with staff from throughout the organisations, physical inspections and file checking. We fully accept the comments made about speaking with residents, and we are fully committed to involving service users in our inspection processes.

This evaluation confirmed the value of producing a draft report prior to a final version for any case studies or inspections. This gives the organisation the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of assessments and is essential to produce a robust report acceptable by all concerned.

How are organisations using the study reports?

Many case study organisations have also given us feedback on how they have either begun to implement changes as a result of this study, or how they intend to use the reports. A number have already made changes to policy, service delivery and monitoring arrangements. In one case this includes an improvement to facilities on a Gypsy/Traveller site. Others have produced or are developing an action plan for improvement. Proposed improvements include signing up to the 'Positive about Disability' scheme, incorporating equalities issues into staff and manager appraisal systems and collecting improved information about service users.

Some organisations intend using the key findings section as a management tool, for example for training purposes. They are also to be used for communication purposes, for example to tenants and committee members, or as in one case, on the organisation's website. A number of organisations are to report on their case study through their corporate committee structure.

Acknowledgement

Regulation & Inspection would like to thank all the people who participated in the evaluation of these studies. All the comments and suggestions made were valuable and we appreciate the time taken by staff to complete questionnaires or attend evaluation sessions.