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Data Collection from Local Authorities

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Issue

1. In response to the Government's reform of health and safety in Britain HSE has reviewed its data requirements from LAs. This paper introduces the proposals for the changes HSE needs to make to provide feedback on action taken by LAs for both the Minister and for LAs for benchmarking purposes.

Timing

2. HELA's view now would be useful as LAs need notice to prepare for the introduction of new arrangements.

Recommendation

3. HELA is invited to:
 - a) endorse the proposals for collecting visit/inspection data from local authorities (LAs) to give feedback on action taken to meet the Ministerial direction;
 - b) support the call for LAs to volunteer to take part in the data sampling exercise; and
 - c) note the progress report on the 2010/11 LA visit/inspection data and the proposed changes to the method of recording and storing LA prosecution data to improve LAs' access to the data.

Background

4. One of the key aspects of the Government's next steps for reform of the health and safety in Britain¹ is the greater targeting of proactive inspections to reduce the inspection burden on businesses which manage health and safety effectively. To assist LAs in achieving this HSE and the Local Government Group published a high level statement '*Joint guidance for reduced proactive inspections*'² in May 2011.
5. A review of the data requirements from LAs is necessary to enable HSE to provide coherent feedback on action taken by LAs (in addition to HSE) to meet the Ministerial direction, for both the Minister, and for LAs for benchmarking purposes.

¹ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/health-and-safety/>.

² <http://www.hse.gov.uk/laU/pdfs/reduced-proactive-inspections.pdf>

6. HSE collects visit/inspection and enforcement data from LAs (including the amount of staff resource used to undertake this work) via the annual LAE1 return. The return was simplified for the collection of the 2010/11 data reducing the data requested to the absolute minimum. Simplifying this return aligns with the Government's policy of reducing the data collection burden on LAs. Further changes to the collection of visit/inspection data via the LAE1 would be made in line with the policy of keeping the amount of data collected to a minimum.
7. In the April 2011 letter to LAs (to Directors of Environmental Health/Chief Environmental Health Officers), requesting completion of the LAE1 return for 2010/11, HSE announced it would be reviewing its data requirements for the collection of visit/inspections' information. The focus of the data requirements review is how the categories - planned and reactive visits - should be unpacked.

Proposals for visit/inspection data collection

8. In light of the '*Joint guidance for reduced proactive inspections*' the main changes to the categories for visit/inspection data collection from LAs proposed are:
 - a) proactive visits category – for risk rated inspections only;
 - b) reactive visits – visits resulting from /reacting to targeted intelligence/evidence, visits for investigation purposes and visits following request for advice; with
 - c) the remainder of the data to be requested includes revisits, other visits and other types of contact/interventions.

An example of an intervention falling into the category (b) above, includes the LPG inspection programme, which continues into 2011/12, higher risk sites have been identified for intervention by means of a site specific analysis of the likelihood an underground LPG pipe failure.

9. Annex 1 gives more detail about the proposals for collecting visits/inspection data and associated guidance for LAs. HSE has made changes to how their visits/inspections are now recorded along similar lines.
10. HSE will need to provide feedback to the Minister on action taken to implement the reforms for the current work year onwards. The proposal is to continue to collect the data via the LAE1. However, as the new data requirements may require a change to IT systems for some LAs, it is proposed to implement the new recording categories for all LAs for the work year starting April 2012, to report in spring 2013. Discussions with several of the main IT providers for the majority of LAs and with a small number of LAs showed that it is feasible to introduce the changes with effect April 2012.
11. For providing feedback for the current work year (2011/12) the proposal is to conduct a 'data sampling exercise' with a volunteer group of LAs for the last quarter of the work year, with those LAs continuing to record and report visits in the first three quarters using the current visit definitions.
12. The sampling exercise would be conducted in one or both of the following ways:
 - a) ask for volunteer LAs to provide the information via their IT systems either because it is already set up to do so or by changing their IT systems to record their visits/inspections in the new categories; and/or
 - b) ask for volunteer LAs to record their visits/inspections in the new categories as an additional recording exercise e.g. by electronic survey or spreadsheet.

HSE statisticians recommend that around 40 LAs would need to be involved in the sampling exercise to enable them to make a realistic estimate that represents the picture for GB.

Future method for collecting LA prosecution data

13. HSE is reviewing the method of collecting this data from LAs. There are no proposals for changing the data requested. The current system is closed for LA data input from July to September to allow for data processing by HSE. By moving to a different type of web-based collection method accessed via the secure Extranet the aim is to enable the information to be immediately visible to all LAs with access and for the system to be open year round for LA data input and viewing. The system will be closed only for the duration needed by HSE to download the data for the preparation of the national statistics. The intention is for the new system to be available for LAs to input their 2011/12 data from autumn 2011.

Progress report – visit/inspection data for 2010/11

2010/11 visit/inspection data

14. At the time of writing approximately 67% of LAs had completed the LAE1 return for 2010/11 compared to over 90% in previous years. There are sufficient returns to enable the statisticians to produce realistic estimates for GB. Early indications from comparing information from the 244 LAs submitting LAE1 returns for both 2009/10 and 2010/11 shows that:
- a) the number of staff LAs deployed on health and safety decreased by over 10% when comparing the 31 March 2011 figures to 31 March 2010;
 - b) the number of proactive/planned visits/inspections had decreased by approximately 5.9%; and
 - c) the total number of visits/inspections increased slightly (by 1.9%).

These are indicative figures only. The full GB picture will only be available, including the staffing figures in terms of full time equivalents, after statistical modelling and estimation has been completed.

Consultation

15. Feasibility for introducing the proposed changes was assessed through discussions with five of the six main LA IT providers and meetings/discussions with three representative LAs (a metropolitan and a district council both with same IT system and a further LA using a different system) to understand how the systems operate in practice.

Presentation

16. Promotion of the proposed changes to LAs will be managed by HSE's Local Authority Unit and FOD partnership contacts.

Action

17. Subject to HELA's endorsement of the proposals HSE LAU will:
- a) introduce the changes in the collection of visit/inspection data from LAs from April 2012;
 - b) seek volunteer LAs and conduct the data sampling exercise to provide feedback on LA actions for the 2011/12 work year; and
 - c) implement the new web-based method for collecting and viewing LA prosecutions data.

Contact

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Proposed categories for visit/inspection data from LAs

	Recording Category	Guidance
Proactive visits	Inspections - risk rated category A	Based on the current priority planning guidance (LAC 67/2)
	Inspections - risk rated category B1	
	Inspections - risk rated category B2 and C	
Reactive visits	Inspection following investigation of incident or complaint or other specific local intelligence.	An inspection undertaken immediately following an investigation where it is necessary to further test h&s risk management arrangements.
	Risk based topic visit	Visits resulting from targeted intelligence/evidence highlighting local/national issues (e.g. LPG).
	Visit to investigate h&s related incidents or complaints	Including incidents not reportable under RIDDOR
	Visits following requests for h&s service from businesses	
Revisits following earlier inspection		Visits following an earlier intervention to confirm action previously suggested has been completed e.g. compliance with notices.
Other visits		Any visit that cannot be classified elsewhere.
Other contacts/non inspection proactive interventions		Other interventions e.g. publicity campaigns, mail shots, questionnaires, follow up to complaints or reported incident via telephone/fax/letter or other means e.g. identified in sector strategies

Categories of visit/inspection data collected from LAs via the current LAE1 (2010/11)

	Recording Category	Guidance
Planned visits	Inspections - based on risk rating	All planned visits e.g. based on risk rating or as part of another planned intervention to LA enforced premises where sufficient health and safety advice was given and confirmed in writing
	Inspections – local/national projects	
	Inspection following investigation	
Reactive visits	Visits to investigate accidents	Also include visits to establish the facts of a health and safety incident reported (including incidents not reported under RIDDOR)
	Visits following requests for health & safety service	Visits to investigate complaints or to provide advice and guidance on the management of health and safety
Revisits		Visits to confirm action previously suggested has been completed e.g. compliance with notices
Other visits		Any visit that cannot be classified elsewhere