

# **Education and Lifelong Learning Committee**

## **Note of Rapporteur Group Visit to Estyn**

**Date: Thursday 30 September 2004**

**Venue: Estyn offices, Keen Road, Cardiff**

### **Rapporteur Group:**

Jeff Cuthbert AM

Janet Ryder AM

Chris Reading (Committee Clerk)

Holly Pembridge (Deputy Committee Clerk)

Anne Thomas (Members' Research Service)

Siân Hughes (Members' Research Service)

### **Estyn:**

Susan Lewis (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Training and Education in Wales)

Liz Kidd (Head of Post-16 Education and Training)

Hilary Anthony (Head of Inspection Division)

## **1. Introduction**

Chris Reading introduced the members of the rapporteur group. He thanked Estyn for hosting the meeting, and explained that this was part of a series of such visits by Committee Members to education and training organisations in Wales. The purpose of this visit was to foster a greater understanding of the work of Estyn: in particular the Corporate Plan 2003-06: objectives, challenges and achievements. The

rapporteur group also wished to gain an understanding of Estyn's remit and the new common inspection framework.

The Chief Inspector introduced her two Heads of Inspection Division: Liz Kidd and Hilary Anthony and then gave an overview of the status and functions of Estyn:

- Routine inspection used 85% of Estyn's resources, survey and provision of advice used 15% of remaining resources;
- Estyn had been remitted to provide advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on aspects of education and training;
- Estyn had continued to expand since 1999;
- From the spending review in 2002, Estyn had been given a rising budget for the period 2003-2006 in recognition of its expanding work. Part way through 2003-2004, the Welsh Assembly Government had imposed a cut to the 2004-2005 budget and provisionally rolled this reduced line forward for two years pending its latest spending review. This had adversely affected Estyn's strategic plans, in particular in relation to planned recruitment for its expansion to carry out new and existing work. Estyn had not been able to pursue all of its recruitment programme, resulting in a large number of vacancies or the use of temporary agency staff in some posts. The inability to recruit to fill all vacancies has affected Estyn's staffing resources in undertaking its work, particularly because it can take at least nine months to recruit an individual inspector. The inability to work to plans has also had an adverse effect on staff morale. Nevertheless, a great deal had been achieved in year to ensure that key developments are on track and achieved to a high standard and good quality;
- The Corporate Plan covers the period 2004-07; developments are shown for 2004-05 because the level of funding beyond that is uncertain at this time. If the previous level of funding is not restored, Estyn would have to review and reprioritise its work. Doing this is difficult as the majority of Estyn's work is done to meet statutory requirements. Given the resource difficulties of the past year, much had been achieved at a time of great change in Estyn's work as a result of the commitment and endeavours of staff.
- In addition to the statutory work that is the bulk of Estyn's work, Estyn receives a remit from the Welsh Assembly Government for advice on a wide range of matters relating to education and training. This is an agenda that is discussed between the Department for Training and Education and Estyn but it is often not finalised until late in the financial year. The late finalisation of the remit presents difficulty to Estyn as it holds up the planning of the inspectorate work programme. The annual and operational nature of the remit also makes it difficult to plan strategically and organisationally for the longer term;
- Discussions about having a remit that is more strategic in nature leaving aside more of the operational decisions about the underpinning work continue between Estyn and DfTE;
- From 2000 onwards, Estyn established a number of stakeholder consultation forums, namely: a schools inspection forum; a post-16 inspection forum; an LEA inspection forum and most recently an independent schools inspection forum. Each of these groups meets twice a year and exists to provide feedback on the inspection service provided by Estyn and a forum for discussion about the issues raised in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report. The membership of the groups is

very wide ranging and is deliberately designed to present external challenge to Estyn. Teacher unions were represented in the fora. For the future, Estyn was hoping to establish a learner forum and initial discussions have already been held with the Children's Commissioner about this;

- Estyn's mission and vision are clearly stated in its Corporate Plan and other key documents. The values underpinning Estyn's quest for excellence for all are set out in a series of guiding principles for Estyn on page two of the current Corporate Plan;
- The range of Estyn's partners was wide and interaction with partners occurred through the fora and various working groups;
- Estyn worked with the other inspectorates in Wales. In particular Estyn works with the Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) and the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW);
- It also works on joint inspections with the Adult Learning Inspectorate in England. Estyn has strong and productive working and training and development arrangements with Ofsted, the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland and HMI(E) in Scotland;
- There are working links with the wider inspectorates (including the Home Office inspectorates for England and Wales). For example, Estyn works with six inspectorate partners (including HM Inspectorate of Probation, HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary) in the inspection of the youth justice system. The Chief Inspectors Forum of all of the UK inspectorates meets twice a year to discuss matters of common interest. The Chief Inspector of Estyn chaired this forum last year;
- As part of this Forum's work, Estyn had compiled an Access database outlining how every inspectorate matches the ten principles outlined by the UK Government in 'Inspecting for Improvement'. ;
- Estyn is a bilingual organisation that actively promotes bilingualism. Estyn has played a role in the previous ELL Committee/Culture Committee review of the Welsh Language and subsequently, the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy: Iaith Pawb; and
- During 2001-2004 Estyn has consulted with and worked closely with its stakeholders to review and develop its inspection arrangements in all areas except the inspections of non-maintained nursery provision and the work of LEAs. Reviews of these two areas are running to a different time-scale. The resulting Common Inspection Framework and common set of inspection arrangements have been very well received and would be operational across inspections of schools (maintained and independent), pupil referral units, FE colleges, initial teacher training institutions, youth support services, adult and community-based learning, work based learning providers, New Deal providers, and Careers Wales, carried out by Estyn from September 2004.

## **2. Estyn's Work**

The Heads of Post-16 Inspection Division gave an overview of the Estyn's inspection activities, with an emphasis on the importance of listening to learners, the use of self-assessment and the development of peer assessment and new ways of involving those whom Estyn inspects. The following points were discussed:

- Estyn's objectives were to: raise standards and quality in education and training; to deliver a high quality education and training inspection service; and to provide independent and sound advice;

and

- As it is for any inspectorate, the independence of Estyn both in real terms and in perception was very important. In the past, Estyn has had to negotiate directly with the Finance Minister for its budget provision; this has recently changed. Having to negotiate with the policy department to whom Estyn provides advice could be perceived as compromising of Estyn's independence.

The following responses were given to Members' questions:

- To bring in Estyn under the auspices of the Welsh Assembly Government would be inappropriate for Estyn: it would reduce its effectiveness and could compromise how Estyn's impartiality was perceived;
- Estyn's work could inform other Ministers, as well as the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning: the Minister for Social Justice re youth offending and the Minister for Economic Development and Transport re work-based learning. The current compiling of the remit did not appear to take account of wider agendas. Estyn's work covered cross-cutting agendas, therefore the Cabinet as a whole might have an interest in Estyn's work;
- It was a possibility that the Welsh Assembly Government's remit letter to Estyn could be contributed to by more than one Minister;
- Estyn had contributed to the Local Government and Public Services Committee's review of inspection; and
- It would be desirable to have a broader, less detailed remit - whereby Estyn could ascertain the operational details.

### **3. Common Inspection Framework**

The Chief Inspector and her Heads of Inspection Divisions gave the following summary:

- Estyn had consulted widely and engaged with the people it inspected, to develop a common inspection framework and a set of common arrangements for education and training in Wales;
- Handbooks had been devised for each provider to demonstrate what the common framework meant for them; and
- The main aim of the framework was to put learners first.

Some of the main aspects to the framework were:

- Focus on learners;
- Use of the provider's own self evaluation report as the basis for the starting point to the inspection;
- Peer assessment - developed from post-16 sector. Active practitioners from each relevant sector were being trained so that they could accompany inspection teams. This would provide both

recent and relevant expertise on teams and provide those taking part with valuable development in the skills of self evaluation, judgement-making, communication and decision-making;

- Institutional nominee - someone from the institution would be invited to be part of the inspection team to contribute to the whole process but not to advocate or lobby to change the judgements of the team. This opportunity has been well received and is enabling providers to be more part of the process and to build in sustainability after the inspection is over;
- Risk assessment - an analysis of risk presented by an institution would provide information to determine the type of inspection that is carried out. There were three types of inspection: i) full; ii) standard; and iii) short. The inspection would be tailored to an institution's needs;
- Shorter notice periods (of a term) would be served to minimise staff anxiety;
- Inspections would be carried on a six-year cycle from 2004. Institutions would be invited to publish a response to the inspection undertaken;
  
- School inspections were largely carried out by independent inspectors working to contract to Estyn. The supply of inspectors had to be constantly replenished and training provided each year to keep people up to date. In the small number of cases where a contract cannot be awarded for whatever reason, HMIs in Estyn undertake these inspections themselves.

#### **4. Remit**

- The Heads of Early Years, Schools and LEA Inspection Division gave the following summary: the remit work carried out by Estyn comprises a range of approaches. Many staff are allocated to national working groups or regular meetings of committees and advisory groups. The bulk of the remit requires detailed written reports based on analysis of existing inspection reports of individual providers or evidence drawn from specially arranged field work. Other advice is given in the form of ad-hoc responses to specific enquiries. Resource constraints referred to earlier, the short-term nature of the remit and the timescale of the remit's delivery put pressure on the ability to deliver the remit. In general, the bulk of the advice work fell to the schools area as most of the school inspections are contracted out; and
- Estyn is asked to measure the impact of guidance or policies. It is sometimes too soon to measure impact of these things although it is understandable that Welsh Assembly Government is keen to know how developments are faring.

#### **5. Open Discussion Session**

The following responses were made to Members' questions:

- If a response paper was needed for advice to schools, e.g. concerning bullying, Estyn had a database containing comments, reports and data. Some advice work could be imparted quickly if the data was already available. Other pieces of advice might require more extensive fieldwork. Estyn was always looking to anticipate advice that the Assembly might require, e.g. advice on bullying in light of the recent tragic case in Neath;

- Each local authority had a link to a district HMI. These District Inspectors provide a good source of information;
- One key benefit from the new common inspection framework would be that it will enable Estyn to make comparative views to be drawn from the different providers and sectors on a more common basis than in the past;
- The copies of the handbook for the new inspection framework were available on Estyn's website, which supported an open, transparent system, of operation;
- Estyn would be receptive to providing position papers for the ELL Committee if requested;
- Estyn did not inspect education in hospital, education administered in the home and did not intervene whereby pupils had been excluded from school. Tutors training for further education or for work-based learning were also not inspected by Estyn where this was part of a higher education course;
- Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) were inspected. LEAs had been identifying more provisions than the Assembly was aware of e.g. satellite units/unofficial PRUs;
- Question three of the standards for the new framework would address local employment/training needs;
- Area inspections would be carried out to ascertain whether provision/quality met ELWa's regional statement of need for 16-19 education. Area inspections for 14 years plus education would be carried out in a specified geographical area;
- Examples of good practice had been gathered from community schools and aspects of family learning had also been considered;
- Estyn was not the lead inspectorate for Youth Offending Teams: this was a Home Office function. The Minister for Social Justice and the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning have an interest in this area; and
- Estyn could inspect any institution where LEAs had funded places for educating children/young people. The Assembly had approved some independent schools for placing children with SEN. An Estyn inspection of provision of this nature would culminate in a day visit.

## **Action Points**

To discuss Estyn's potential provision of short-term advice to Committee when required - at ELL party spokespersons' meeting

Relevant Documents

Corporate Plan 2003-06

Remit Letter 2004-05

The Common Inspection Framework for Education and Training in Wales