



Non Statutory Policy

On

Best Value Statement

Drafted by:
Director of Business & Finance

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Person(s) Responsible for Day to Day Management:
Director of Business & Finance

Person Responsible for Review:
Director of Business & Finance

Best Value and Schools

Introduction

There is a statutory duty on local authorities & schools to obtain Best Value by securing economic, efficient and effective services. The Best Value framework primarily focuses on the balance between cost and quality in striving continuously to improve services.

The Best Value approach does not apply statutorily to governing bodies in their use of delegated and devolved budgets. However, governing bodies are expected to set targets to raise standards, provide good quality public services and spend public money wisely. Schools are accountable for balancing costs (in terms of economy and efficiency) and effectiveness (in terms of their performance and the quality of what they provide). To achieve this, schools effectively need to demonstrate that they apply Best Value principles in arriving at decisions about all their activities, especially how the financial resources delegated to them are managed.

In practical terms, the main features of Best Value can be summarised as a need for the governing body of a school to act on the outcomes of self-review with the aim of securing continual improvement. Existing mechanisms such as school development plans, post-OFSTED inspection action plans and the DfE “Managing School Resources Self Evaluation Tool” (www.schoolsresource.audit-commission.gov.uk) provide opportunities for the governing body to demonstrate that they are applying the four principles of Best Value: Compare, Challenge, Compete and Consult.

Schools apply these principles by :-

- comparing** their performance against that of other schools;
- challenging** whether the performance is good enough and how and why services are provided;
- consulting** stakeholders, especially parents and pupils;
- competition** as a means of securing economic, efficient and effective services.

Implementation

The Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools requires schools to adopt the principles of Best Value. The Scheme also requires that schools submit a Best Value Statement to the local authority every year with their budget plan. This has not been enforced by the authority, but in light of the requirements new SFVS deems it sufficient for schools to complete and include a Best Value Statement in their self assessment evidence file. The Best Value Statement should be approved by the Governing Body or by the Resources Committee if such power has been delegated.

The proforma Best Value Statement represents a strategic approach for reviewing a number of financial and non-financial functions of the school. Areas suggested for review are included as part of the pro-forma statement, but it is recognised that these will need to vary according to the needs of each individual school. It would be exceptional to review all the functions at the same time, which is why the Best Value Statement takes a planned approach over a number of years. It is essential that the Best Value reviews are in line with the School Improvement Plan and the two initiatives are fully integrated. Schools may also wish to include the Best Value review areas in the performance management targets for their finance staff if they are allocated responsibility for carrying out/managing these reviews.

Once the areas for review have been determined, schools can apply the four Best Value principles :-

Compare

Comparison of a school with similar schools is often possible using benchmarking data. Also schools may wish to work collaboratively to pool knowledge or to perform a Best Value review jointly as the issues may often be the same. Example questions a school may ask are :-

What is the quality/ performance of other schools?

How do our standards compare with theirs?

Are we a relatively high performer?

Do we cost more or less than others?

Why?

Challenge

A school will want to question why a service is provided in a certain way. This may come about as a challenge from governors or from a local authority inspection or from a training course or a new member of staff. Challenge may also involve discussion as to whether or not a service is best provided through a local authority SLA. Example questions are :-

Why are we doing this?

Is it what people want?

What is the evidence about level of need?

Could someone else do it differently, or better?

Consult

Schools regularly consult with staff, parents and children (through the School Council). A school should regularly be asking stakeholders whether it is meeting their needs. Example questions are :-

What stakeholders want the school to do?

What stakeholders think of proposed changes or major expenditure?

Whether stakeholders are happy with, or at, the school?

What is in the stakeholders' best interests?

Compete

Schools should encourage competition to ensure that they obtain goods and services at the right price. This is dealt with automatically for larger contracts under "contract standing orders", but can be extended to other areas. It should be noted that schools may feel that Best Value is achieved for small value goods and services by using a local supplier who provides a reliable service in a timely fashion. Example questions are :-

Is this service being provided at the right price?

Could we or others provide it at a better price?

What do the users of this service want?

What is in the best interests of pupils and parents?

How does the school ensure it receives the most economic, efficient and effective service from those who provide services to pupils and staff?

Once a review of an area has been completed, the outcome should be reported back to the governors, including appropriate recommendations for action.

Further Information

www.dfes.gov.uk/vfm/bvalue.shtml

www.schoolsresource.audit-commission.gov.uk