

## Further information

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## Social Care Regulation: Resource Use

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Between 2002 and 2004 the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) regulated social care in England. In 2003, the NCSC commissioned the PSSRU to establish its resource requirements (Netten et al., 2004). The study was designed to be comparable with research into the costs of social care regulation under the previous arrangement of local registration and inspection units (Netten et al., 1999; Netten et al., 2000).

The NCSC was responsible for regulating providers of adult and children's social care services in the public, private and voluntary sector. For the first time there were consistent national minimum standards for provision and national inspection methodologies. Regulatory functions included the registration and inspection of services, enforcement action to ensure compliance with mandatory regulations, the promotion of quality (support and development), and the investigation of complaints.

We found that a greater proportion of inspectors' time was spent on inspections than in the past, and a lower proportion of time on management and administration, development activities, and enforcement activities. These changes were in line with a number of policies: greater involvement of administrators; separation of the support and development function from day-to-day inspection activities; a 'light touch' approach towards enforcement.

The degree of specialisation by inspectors in adults or children's services had also reduced.

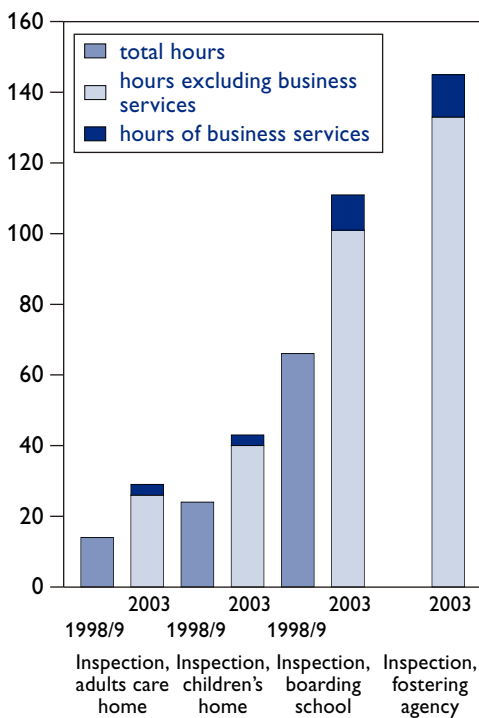
There was a statistically significant increase in the time spent on inspections. Figure 1 shows that this was the case for care homes for adults, children's homes, and boarding schools. The increase did not appear to reduce over the period of data collection and so was unlikely to reflect unfamiliarity with new methodologies. Variation in the time spent on announced inspections had also increased.

The services that took the most time on average to inspect were independent fostering agencies, which were regulated for the first time. The time spent by inspectors on processing changes to registration, however, had decreased.

Changes in the process of regulation were such that an increase in time spent on inspection was anticipated. The increase in the variation in time spent was less expected and difficult to account for given the use of more standardised procedures.

The study examined the resource implications of one major change in the regulatory framework. Changes continue: in April 2004 the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) replaced the NCSC, and took on the additional responsibility of assessing the performance of council social services departments. Further restructuring is planned for 2008 when its functions will be split; social care regulation will move to the health regulator and the education function to the schools inspectorate.

Figure 1 Hours spent on inspections in 2003 and 1998/9



## References

Netten, A., Forder, J. and Knight, J. (1999) *Costs of regulating care homes for adults*, PSSRU Discussion Paper 1496/2.  
 Netten, A., Forder, J. and Matosevic, T. (2000) *Costs of regulating residential care services for children*, PSSRU Discussion Paper 1643/2.

Netten, A., Williams, J., Dennett, J., Wiseman, J. and Fenyo, A. (2004) *Social care regulation: resource use*. Final report, PSSRU Discussion Paper 2042/4.