

**To: Interested Parties**

Our ref: VTS/34/66

Date: 11 April 2006

Dear Sir / Madam

**PUBLIC WRITTEN CONSULTATION**

**Proposed changes to veterinary supervision arrangements  
within the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS)**

**Executive Summary**

1. **This letter seeks your views and comments on proposals for enhancing veterinary supervision arrangements within the MHS, and follows publication today of an MHS paper setting out possible options.**
2. Development of these proposals has been informed by recommendations in the Wall Report and the subsequent two reports commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) / MHS from DNV Consulting (with the second of these also published today) and the Independent Advisory Group's (IAG) requirements relating to the Over Thirty Month (OTM) rule change.
3. The MHS Management Board has identified a number of options for improving veterinary supervision arrangements within the MHS and has indicated a preferred option. These options are set out in the attached MHS paper which has been approved by the MHS Board for consultation. The preferred option principally involves in the short-term:
  - continuing to work through our contractors to provide Official Veterinarians in slaughterhouses and game handling establishments, but with technical management and supervision of these Official Veterinarians by MHS employed Area Official Veterinarians;
  - audits of Food Business Operators' food safety management systems in slaughterhouses and game handling establishments

(and at co-located cutting plants) continuing in most cases to be undertaken by the Official Veterinarian responsible at these premises, supervised by the Area Official Veterinarian. Area Official Veterinarians will carry out audits in most stand-alone cutting plants and will have ultimate responsibility for the standard of official controls in *all* establishments subject to veterinary control;

- a re-alignment of other veterinary support roles within the organisation to better meet business needs, with resources transferred either to the new Area Official Veterinarian role or to the Veterinary and Technical Directorate, for the provision of supervision, enhanced instructions, advice, training and support; and
- establishment of a clear veterinary and technical reporting line to the MHS Veterinary and Technical Director and in turn to the FSA Veterinary Director and the Government's Chief Veterinary Officer.

A further review of arrangements would be carried out by the end of 2007, looking to requirements for the longer term, with the intention that the MHS should eventually move to a largely (40 - 50%) employed Official Veterinarian workforce.

4. Your views and comments on these options and any others you may have for improving veterinary supervision arrangements in the MHS are invited. Responses on the consultation are required by **Friday, 7 July 2006**. When replying, please state whether you are responding as a private individual or on behalf of an organisation/company.

**All comments and views should be sent to:**

**Liz Olney**

Veterinary and Technical Directorate  
Meat Hygiene Service  
Headquarters  
Kings Pool  
Peasholme Green  
York  
YO1 7PR  
Tel: 01904 456584  
Fax: 01904 455420

Or by email to: [veterinary.supervision@mhs.foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:veterinary.supervision@mhs.foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

5. A list of interested parties to whom this letter is being sent can be found in **Annex A**. Please feel free to pass this document to any other parties with an interest in this subject matter, or send me their full contact details and I will arrange for a copy to be sent to them direct.

6. A copy of the consultation package is available on the FSA website at [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk). A summary of the responses received to this consultation will be published on the FSA website within three months of the end date for the consultation.

## **Background**

7. The MHS is an executive agency of the FSA. It is the enforcement body responsible for ensuring Food Business Operators comply with legislation relating to public health, animal health and animal welfare at slaughter in approved meat establishments requiring veterinary control within Great Britain, on behalf of the FSA.
8. At the current time, around 92% of Official Veterinarians (or 337 out of 364 full-time equivalents) are currently supplied to the MHS by veterinary contractors.
9. In 2004, the MHS was subject to an independent inquiry by Professor Wall into the failure of the organisation at that time to ensure all relevant 'at risk' 24-30 month bovines had been tested for BSE. Professor Wall's report, published in October 2004<sup>1</sup>, made a number of recommendations for change to ensure that measures were put in place to minimise the risk of failure recurring. Three in particular were directed towards the veterinary structure within the MHS, namely:
  - to develop a proper monitoring system and supervisory structure for Official Veterinarians and Meat Hygiene Inspectors;
  - to improve contractor accountability for technical performance or provide MHS line management for contracted staff; and
  - to develop a more integrated service by making key linkages more effectively.
10. A separate Independent Advisory Group (IAG), also chaired by Professor Wall, was set up in November 2004, to address issues associated with the identification and testing of Over Thirty Month (OTM) animals. The Group made a number of detailed recommendations concerning the processing controls and direct line management responsibilities that needed to be put in place to ensure that a robust testing system was established.
11. As a follow up to the initial Wall Report, the FSA later commissioned DNV Consulting to carry out a review of the management system within the MHS, taking into account the potential reintroduction of OTM bovines into the food chain.

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<sup>1</sup> Inquiry into the failure to comply with requirements to test all relevant 24-30 month old casualty animals for BSE (the Wall Report) ([www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/wallreport.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/wallreport.pdf)).

12. DNV Consulting's first report (dated 9 February 2005)<sup>2</sup> recommended that a full assessment of the cost / benefit of the current contract arrangements was conducted, together with a review of alternative options, in order to deliver a rational plan for the future. This report and the FSA / MHS response were published in June 2005<sup>3</sup>.
13. The FSA Chief Executive subsequently asked the FSA and MHS to suggest possible options for veterinary supervision at meat establishments in the future, with the request that three options be examined. These were:
- An enhanced contractor system;
  - A fully employed competent authority system; and
  - A hybrid system.
14. DNV Consulting later looked at these and advised on the options. Their second report was submitted to the FSA and MHS Chief Executives on 1 July 2005 and is now available on the FSA website<sup>4</sup>. While the report did not draw any firm conclusions (pending further work which it recommended), it identified that a fully employed competent authority system was the most cost effective of the three options considered. However, it acknowledged there were significant risks associated with such a switch, with concerns on the ability of the MHS to integrate and manage a fully employed Official Veterinarian workforce during a period of uncertainty.
15. Since the DNV reports were received, and following the Wall report and IAG requirements, an internal MHS review has been underway on future veterinary supervision arrangements<sup>5</sup>. Five options for veterinary supervision were considered, varying from maintaining current arrangements (though use of contractors providing a fully managed Official Veterinarian service) to moving to a 'fully' employed Official Veterinarian workforce. The review took into account various factors such as the impact of the OTM rule review change and changes arising from the EU Food Hygiene legislation which applied from 1 January 2006.

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<sup>2</sup> DNV Consulting report 1: 'Review of MHS Management System following the Wall Report Recommendations' dated February 2005

([www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/dnvfinalreport.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/dnvfinalreport.pdf)) dated February 2005.

<sup>3</sup> DNV Consulting report: 'FSA/MHS response' dated June 2005

([www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/dnvreportresponse.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/dnvreportresponse.pdf)).

<sup>4</sup> DNV Consulting report 2: 'Review of options for provision of Veterinary Surgeons within the MHS' dated July 2005 ([www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mhsdnv2.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mhsdnv2.pdf)).

<sup>5</sup> MHS Report 2006: 'Veterinary supervision arrangements within the MHS' ([www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mhsvet06.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mhsvet06.pdf)).

16. The review also considered:

- veterinary support roles within the MHS;
- the provision of advice and support by the Veterinary and Technical Support Unit;
- the identification and development of technical training and its delivery; and
- the Veterinary / Technical reporting line from the MHS Veterinary and Technical Director to MHS plant-based staff.

17. In light of these considerations, the MHS Management Board has identified a preferred option, which has been approved by the MHS Board as a basis for consultation, as follows:

- For the immediate future, and as a first step, veterinary supervision arrangements in the MHS to be based on an enhanced hybrid system (Option 5 of the MHS paper), with:
  - veterinary contractors continuing to provide Official Veterinarians in slaughterhouses and game handling establishments, but with technical management and supervision of these Official Veterinarians by MHS employed Area Official Veterinarians;
  - audits of Food Business Operators' food safety management systems in slaughterhouses and game handling establishments (and at co-located cutting plants) continuing in most cases to be undertaken by the Official Veterinarian responsible at these premises, supervised by the Area Official Veterinarian. Area Official Veterinarians will carry out audits in most stand-alone cutting plants and will have ultimate responsibility for the standard of official controls in *all* establishments subject to veterinary control;
  - a re-alignment of other veterinary support roles within the organisation to better meet business needs, with resources transferred either to the new Area Official Veterinarian role or to the Veterinary and Technical Support Unit, for the provision of supervision, enhanced instructions, advice, training and support; and
  - the establishment of a clear veterinary and technical reporting line within the organisation to the MHS Veterinary and Technical Director and in turn to the FSA Veterinary Director and the Government's Chief Veterinary Officer.
- In the longer term, the MHS should move to a largely employed Official Veterinarian workforce (with an Official Veterinarian employed level of 40-50%), with contract arrangements maintained

for establishments operating on a limited basis or situated in remote regions and for possible locum cover (Option 4);

- With the longer term aim in mind, the MHS should review its veterinary supervision arrangements no later than the end of 2007.

18. It should be noted that while the enhanced hybrid system (or 'enhanced contractor system' as it is referred to in the second DNV Consulting report), was not favoured by DNV Consulting in the form that they considered, it has been adapted in the MHS paper to overcome some of the identified weaknesses, particularly with the change to the veterinary support roles and establishment of the clear reporting line to the Veterinary and Technical Director.

### **Current and proposed veterinary supervision arrangements**

19. For information on the current MHS structure, veterinary supervision arrangements and key operational roles, please see:

- Section 3.0 of the DNV 2 report; and
- Sections 4, 5 and Annex 1 of the MHS report.

Section 6 of the MHS report also describes the new Area Official Veterinarian role and its current remit.

20. Paragraphs 7.14 – 7.17 of the MHS report provide details of the preferred short-term option for changes to the veterinary supervision arrangements, with further discussion in paragraphs 8.5 – 8.10. The proposed future structure is set out in Annex 2 of this report.

### **Details of this consultation**

21. Your views are sought on the preferred option to enhance veterinary supervision arrangements within the MHS in the short-term (Option 5) and to review for the longer term (Option 4). Full details on these and other options that were considered by the MHS are provided in Sections 7 and 8 of the MHS Report, with further background in the second DNV Consulting report.

22. Proposals are at an early stage in development and stakeholder views are invited to help formulate how enhancement of official controls can be delivered through changes to the veterinary structure. Any other proposals you may have for delivering this objective are invited as part of this consultation.

23. With the launch of this public consultation, discussions with staff affected by the proposals and more detailed planning will now commence. A meeting with Official Veterinarian contract holders will take place during April 2006, and discussions with industry stakeholders and others are also planned during the period of the consultation.

24. If you would like a meeting to discuss the contents of this consultation and your comments, then please contact me at the address given in paragraph 4. above.

### **Timing of planned changes**

25. Current contracts with contract holders providing Official Veterinarians to the MHS run until 30 April 2007. A national re-tendering exercise is scheduled to take place over the coming months, with the intention that new contracts should run from 1 May 2007. Depending on the outcome of this public consultation, it is intended that new veterinary supervision arrangements within the MHS, as detailed in Option 5 of the MHS paper, will be in place ahead of the new veterinary contracts taking effect, and that services tendered for will reflect the new veterinary structure.

26. In the light of responses to this consultation, a fully costed model for future veterinary supervision arrangements in the MHS will be prepared and considered by the MHS Management Board and MHS Board. The required changes will then be implemented.

### **Specific questions / issues**

27. Specific questions and issues for the consultation are set out below.

- i) Stakeholders are asked to consider the proposed changes to veterinary supervision arrangements within the MHS in the short-term (Option 5 of the MHS report).

**Views are invited on whether the proposed changes would meet the recommendations of the Wall report and the requirements of the IAG by providing direct veterinary / technical supervision and also to deliver business needs.**

- ii) **We encourage feedback from industry representatives on the effectiveness of the measures in place at establishments processing OTM animals for human consumption, for which the Area Official Veterinarian role has already been introduced, with corresponding technical management and supervision.**
- iii) With reference to considerations in DNV Report 2 and the MHS report, views on the proposed new veterinary structure, change in responsibilities and establishment of a clear veterinary and technical reporting line would be appreciated.

**In particular, would the proposed changes help ensure that consistent policies are in place, decisions are taken at the correct level and with appropriate authority?**

- iv) We recognise that the proposed changes in the short-term, will affect those businesses supplying Official Veterinarians under contract. A

notable difference would be the transfer of responsibility for technical decisions made by the Official Veterinarian from the contractor to the MHS. DNV Report 2 recognised that such a move would result in a major change to the role of the larger contractors to that resembling a specialist employment agency, and would require a new tendering process and change to contract arrangements.

These changes must also be coupled with the implications of the two recent change programmes on Official Veterinarian attendance levels – the implementation of the EU Food Hygiene legislation and the OTM rule change – with the former presenting the opportunity for reduced Official Veterinarian attendance levels in certain slaughterhouses and game handling establishments, on the basis of risk-analysis.

**We would appreciate comments from Official Veterinarian contract holders on the impact of the change to veterinary supervision arrangements to their businesses. Will you tender to provide veterinary services in the short-term (for 1 May 2007)? What about options for the longer-term, in the event that the MHS moves more to a fully-employed Official Veterinarian workforce?**

- v) Are there any other options for enhancing veterinary supervision arrangements in the MHS which are not included in the consultation paper, but which you would like to see considered before any final decisions are made?**

#### **Comments on the consultation process itself**

28. We are interested in what you thought of this consultation and would therefore welcome your general feedback on both the consultation package and overall consultation process. If you would like to assist us to improve the quality of future consultations, please feel free to share your thoughts with us by using the Consultation Feedback Questionnaire which is attached in **Annex B**.
29. If any of the mailing information used to send you this letter has changed, please advise us direct using the Feedback Questionnaire.
30. If you would like to be included on future MHS consultations on other topics, please advise us of those subject areas that you might be specifically interested in by using the Feedback Questionnaire.

## **Publication of personal data and confidentiality of responses**

31. As the publication of responses may include personal data, such as your full name and contact address details, please advise us of any objections to this by fully completing and returning the Publication of Personal Data Form (in **Annex C**) together with your response to the consultation. Return of this form does not mean that we will treat your response to the consultation as confidential, just that we will keep your personal contact details private.
32. You should note that all information contained within your response may be subject to publication or disclosure under freedom of information legislation. If you consider that some of the information provided in your response should not be disclosed, you should indicate the information concerned, request that it is not disclosed and explain what harm you consider would result from disclosure.
33. Any automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be considered as such a request, unless you specifically include a request with an explanation, in the main text of your response.

## **Further information**

34. This consultation has been prepared in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Code of Practice on Consultation, available at: <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/code.asp>. The consultation criteria have been reproduced within **Annex D**.
35. For details about the consultation process (not the content), please contact the MHS Consultation Co-ordinator, MHS Headquarters, Kings Pool, Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PR or telephone 01904 456382.

## **Regulatory Impact Assessment**

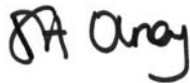
36. Criterion 6 of the Cabinet Office Code of Practice states that a consultation must follow better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment. The DNV Consulting report does consider cost effectiveness of a number of options. However, this was produced before the impact of the two recent change programmes (the OTM rule change and introduction of the EU Food Hygiene legislation on 1 January 2006) on Official Veterinarian attendance levels was fully known.
37. A Regulatory Impact Assessment will be completed in light of comments received during this consultation process and from more detailed engagement planned with those stakeholders that are directly affected by the proposals.

**The proposed short-term arrangements are not expected to present additional costs to industry, although the potential impact will be assessed and made available for further consideration. Any views at this stage are invited.**

**We would welcome any comments on cost and resource implications of the proposed short-term changes to supervision arrangements from veterinary contract holders currently providing Official Veterinarians under contract arrangements.**

Thank you on behalf of the MHS for participating in this public consultation.

Yours faithfully



**Liz Olney (Mrs)**  
Veterinary Supervision Project Manager

email: [liz.olney@mhs.foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:liz.olney@mhs.foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)  
direct telephone: 01904 456584

**Annexes to consultation letter**

- Annex A List of Interested Parties
- Annex B Consultation Feedback Questionnaire
- Annex C Publication of Personal Data form
- Annex D Cabinet Office Consultation Criteria

**Enclosures (2)**

- (1) MHS Report 2006: 'Veterinary supervision arrangements within the MHS'.
- (2) DNV Consulting report 2: 'Review of options for provision of Veterinary Surgeons within the MHS' dated July 2005.

A G Rafferty  
A M Williamson  
Acorn Vets Limited  
Aker  
Alexander Associates  
Ardene House Vet Hospital  
Armac Vet Group  
ARO Co Limited  
Association of British Abattoir Operators  
Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS)  
Association of Meat Inspectors (AMI)  
Avenue Veterinary Centre  
Bellevue Vet Group  
Beth Newman MRCVS  
Bodrwsiwn Veterinary Group  
British Association for Shooting and Conservation  
British Cattle Movement Service  
British Deer Society  
British Meat Processors' Association (BMPA)  
British Pig Executive (BPEX)  
British Poultry Council (BPC)  
British Retail Consortium (BRC)  
British Veterinary Association  
British Veterinary Association (Scottish Branch)  
British Wild Boar Association  
C Johnstone T/A Meat Vets  
Carrick Veterinary Centre  
Castle & Niall Veterinary Services  
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)  
Clyde Veterinary Group  
Conanvet  
Country Land and Business Owners' Association  
County Vet Group  
Crescent Veterinary Clinic  
Daleside Veterinary Group  
DARDNI  
Deer Commission of Scotland  
Deer Initiative  
Defra  
Deveron Veterinary Surgeons  
E.LI. Williams  
Eastgate Veterinary Group  
English Beef and Lamb Executive (EBLEX)  
Eville & Jones  
Farmers Union of Wales (FUW)  
FCI-Food Consultancy & Inspection Ltd  
Federation of Wholesale Distributors  
Fenton Vet Centre  
Food Commission

Food Standards Agency  
Foodaware  
G & P J Nute  
Gordon Laboratory Group Ltd  
Graig Farm Organics  
Grants Veterinary Services Ltd  
Guild Of Welsh Lamb & Beef Suppliers  
Halal Food Authority  
Hall Mark Meat Hygiene Ltd  
Hameolytic Ureamic Syndrome Help (HUSH)  
Harbit & Ryder  
Hector A Low  
Hook Norton Veterinary Services  
Human BSE Foundation  
Hygiene Audit Limited  
International Meat Traders' Association  
Islamic Cultural Centre  
Jeffrey Kidner  
John Highet Ltd  
John J Cranley  
Lawrence VMH Ltd  
Lerwick Veterinary Practice  
Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS)  
M Wheeler  
Mctaggart Vet Group  
Meat & Livestock Commission  
Meat Promotion Wales (HCC)  
Meat Training Council  
Merlin Veterinary Group  
Michael Gratton  
Midforest Vet Practice  
Miller & Swann Vet Surgeons  
Mount Services Wellington Ltd  
Mulim Council Of Britain  
National Association of British Markets Authorities  
National Association of Catering Butchers  
National Association of Poultry Suppliers  
National Consumer Council  
National Consumer Federation  
National Council of Shechita Board (NCSB)  
National Council of Women  
National Farmers Union (NFU)  
National Farmers Union of Scotland (NFUS)  
National Farmers Union of Wales (NFUCW)  
National Federation of Meat & Food Traders (NFMFT)  
National Federation of Womens Institutes  
National Game Dealers Association  
National Gamekeepers Organisation  
Oaksford & Birch  
Old Courts Veterinary Centre

Onevet & Co  
Paragon Veterinary Group  
Patrick A Boyd  
Paws  
Pearson, Thompson & Callery  
Perriferell Veterinary Services  
Quality Meat Scotland  
Quarry Veterinary Group  
Raoul Dowding Vet Surgery  
Reivers Veterinary Services  
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)  
Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland  
Royal Society For The Promotion Of Health (RSPH)  
RSPCA  
Rue De Treves  
Rural Payments Agency  
S A Goodall  
Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW)  
Scottish Consumer Council  
Scottish Executive  
Scottish Federation Of Meat Traders' Association  
Scottish Game Dealers and Processors Association  
Scotvet OVS Services  
Sinclair & Wight  
Small Abattoir Federation (SAFe)  
Southern Isles Vet Practice  
STA-Vets Limited  
Sustain - The Alliance For Better Food And Farming  
TAPPAG  
The City Of London Corporation  
The Crofts Vet Centre  
The Storrar Practice  
The Willows Vet Group  
Townswomen's Guild  
UNISON  
Veterinary Medicines Directorate  
VMHS  
VPHA  
W J Ferris  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Welsh Consumer Council  
Which?

**Consultation feedback questionnaire**



**Proposed changes to veterinary supervision arrangements  
within the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS)**

We would be interested in what you thought of this consultation package. Please spend a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire and return it, even if you do not intend to respond to the consultation itself. Please return the questionnaire no later than Friday, 7 July 2006 to:

**Liz Olney**  
Veterinary and Technical Directorate  
Meat Hygiene Service  
Headquarters  
Kings Pool  
Peasholme Green  
York  
YO1 7PR  
Fax: 01904 455420

## Consultation feedback questionnaire

### 1. How did you become aware of this consultation exercise?

Our consultation list included you or your organisation's name

Via the FSA website (www.food.gov.uk)

Via the UK Online website (www.ukonline.gov.uk)

Through a publication (please specify title)

By other means (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. If you / your organisation are not responding to the consultation, is it because:

You are not working on this subject area

The consultation topic is not relevant to you

You do not have the time / resources to reply

Other reason (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Do you feel you were given enough time to respond to the issues / proposals in the consultation?

Yes   No

### 4. Were the issues / proposals clearly set out and easy to understand?

Yes   No

### 5. Do you have any suggestions on how the consultation package could have been improved?

Yes   No

### 6. Do you have any other comments about this consultation exercise? (Please continue overleaf if required)

## Consultation feedback questionnaire

7. If you received this consultation direct, were the contact and address details correct? If not, please kindly provide the correct details for us to use in the future.

8. Do you still wish to remain on our consultation list?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

9. Are there any other MHS subject areas on which you would be interested in receiving future consultations?

<p><b>Name:</b> .....</p> <p>Organisation: .....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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**Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this feedback questionnaire**

**Privacy Statement**

The MEAT HYGIENE SERVICE is totally committed to complying with the 1998 Data Protection Act principles that protect facts and opinions about the individual. Any personal information that you provide will only be used for a specific purpose. We will not pass on personal information to others outside of our organisation unless the Data Protection Act allows us to do so. *If you have concerns about your personal data please contact the Meat Hygiene Service Data Protection Officer at*

*Data.protection@mhs.foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk*



**Publication of Personal Data**

Please note that the Meat Hygiene Service may publish details that you supply in legitimate pursuit of the functions of the organisation.

As the publication of responses in full may include personal data (such as your full name and contact address details) would you please let us know if you object to us using this information.

Please tick the box below, complete the relevant details and return the form (together with your response) to indicate your objection.

\*I **do not** agree to the publication of my personal details.

**\*If no objection is received we will assume that you consent to the full disclosure of your personal details and these may be published.**

Full Name:

Full postal address:

To comply with the Data Protection Act it is essential that we keep our records up to date. Would you please inform us if your personal details change.

This form has been issued by:

If you have any queries please contact:

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General information about the most recent Data Protection Act can be viewed on the Information Commissioner's Office website at [www.dataprotection.gov.uk](http://www.dataprotection.gov.uk). For

*general enquiries you may contact Tel: 01625 545745*

## **The Six Consultation Criteria**

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.