

Proposed Safer Communities Board intervention for 2006-07 – Sprinklers

1. *The installation of sprinklers in schools and other buildings where vulnerable people are likely to be accommodated has long been a concern of fire and rescue authority members. In February 2004, the LGA published a series of toolkits on automatic fire sprinklers aimed at local authorities, schools and homeowners, and used these as a basis for a range of lobbying activity. More recently, the Fire Services Management Committee highlighted the issue in their work programme for 2005-06, and work is currently underway on a range of fronts:*

- *liaison with the British Fire Safety Consortium to look at the case for updating the LGA toolkits in light of changes to British Standards and other developments in policy and practice;*
- *liaison with planning officials in the Department for Communities and Local Government on the ongoing work to revise Part B of Building Regulations and its associated Approved Document (the documents which would need to be revised to make sprinklers mandatory in new build schools, for example);*
- *consideration of a proposal from Elements, a PR company working on behalf of the British Automatic Fire Suppression Association, to participate in an awareness raising campaign on the benefits of sprinklers.*

2. *The coming year presents a range of opportunities into which an intervention by the LGA could link:*

- *DfES's continuing capital investment in new schools through the Building Schools for the Future programme;*
- *the Elements campaign referred to above;*
- *work being undertaken by LFEPA on another awareness raising campaign, again focussed on sprinklers in schools;*
- *the ongoing involvement of the National Governors Association in raising awareness of fire risk assessment among head teachers and governors;*
- *DCLG's publication of the revised Part B of the Building Regulations and its associated Approved Document, expected in the autumn; and*
- *the likelihood of continuing political interest (Early Day Motions on sprinklers continue to be tabled, with the most recent by Celia Barlow MP collecting 160 signatures so far).*

3. *While changes to Building Regulations could force the installation of sprinklers, delivery could be achieved now if local government spoke with a single voice on the issue. We must understand the barriers that are currently preventing education and planning authorities from taking a positive approach to sprinklers, and consider what can be done to address those barriers. Action by the LGA would enable the campaigns by Elements and LFEPA to be seen in the context of local government working collectively and constructively on the issue. In doing so, we will be able to demonstrate that joined-up local government can take forward an issue on which leadership from central government has arguably been lacking, saving lives and safeguarding investment in schools and other important community facilities.*