

## Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) Briefing

### Background

The Audit Commission, Commission for Social Care Inspection, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted have published the first joint inspectorate consultation on the CAA.

This joint inspectorate consultation invites views on proposals for the overall shape and scope of CAA. The aim of the proposals is to provide a holistic, independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living within them. This should place the experience of citizens, people who use services and local tax payers at the centre of the new local assessment framework, with a particular focus on the needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Key features of the proposals:

- The CAA framework is concerned with those outcomes delivered by councils working alone or in partnership. So in addition to council services, its scope includes services developed in partnership, for instance health and well-being, community safety and cohesion, sustainable communities, economic development, housing, children's and older people's services.
- The new framework will be a joint-inspectorate annual assessment of the prospects for the local area and the quality of life for local people (referred to in the Local Government White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities as the area risk assessment). The improvement priorities in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) will be the key focus. The assessment will judge the likelihood of the targeted improvements being achieved and, where appropriate, will identify barriers to that improvement.
- CAA will draw on the new national indicator set and be influenced by the views of local people through a new Place Based Survey that will replace the Best Value General Survey, and other engagement methods. The assessment will not be restricted to the LAA priorities, and is likely to reflect the inspectorates' assessment of the quality of engagement with local communities and the risks to people in vulnerable circumstances in the area. It will be publicly reported, as a statement to be considered by the local strategic partnership collectively as well as other organisations.
- CAA will be introduced from April 2009. It will replace CPA, Children's Services joint area reviews, Annual Performance Assessments (APA) of services for children and young people, and social services star ratings for adult social care. There will still be a requirement to produce a joint-inspectorate direction of travel assessment (score for all councils) and a scored use of resources from the Audit Commission).

- The annual scored use of resources judgement (for councils, police authorities, primary care trusts and fire and rescue authorities) will continue the current approach but with an enhanced focus on value for money and strengthened financial management. The scope of assessment is broadened to including commissioning and procurement capabilities and sustainability.

#### **What will it mean for us?**

- The CAA could offer a real opportunity to reduce the burden of regulation and help councils and local partners to improve services and deliver better outcomes.
- Where sound arrangements are in place and improved outcomes are being achieved, inspection activity will be reduced, leading to reduced levels of self-assessment
- Greater access to areas of good practice and streamlined data collection and sharing, leading to an improved knowledge based information set about our area
- LAA will be a key focus for the assessment
- Reduced indicator set
- Reduce overlap in inspection contact, information gathering and reporting

#### **Consultation**

The joint inspectorate consultation invites views on proposals for the overall shape and scope of CAA. In particular on:

- The area risk assessment;
- How the different elements of CAA will fit together;
- The evidence that will be used, how we will gather it, and the link between current performance and risk assessment;
- Reporting to, and engaging with, the public and how CAA will maintain a clear focus on improving performance
- How CAA fits with Sustainable Communities Strategies, Local Area Agreements and the role of regional Government Offices.

Members might wish to consider specific questions around:

- Generally what are your feelings about the proposals?
- How should the Audit Commission ensure that performance information and reporting published is **relevant** and **accessible** to councils and their partners, local people and central government?
- Will the approach described be an effective and efficient way of working with councils and their partners to deliver CAA?

Please send your responses to James Winterbottom (PPI Team) on [J.Winterbottom@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:J.Winterbottom@wigan.gov.uk)

The full consultation document can be viewed at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/127A6321-4FA8-40ba-BCE2-CF1023A3DDB9/CAAConsultation22Nov07REP.pdf>