

Comprehensive Area Assessment

Joint Inspectorate Proposals for Consultation – Summer 2008

Summary of proposals:

- CAA will assess those outcomes delivered by councils working alone or in partnership e.g. health and well-being, community safety, children's and older people's services, etc.
- CAA will replace CPA, Children's services JARs, APA of services for children and young people and social services star ratings. Performance frameworks for specific services (e.g. schools, colleges, police, probation and health and social care) will continue.
- CAA represents a fundamental change in the way councils and their partners are assessed. It involves a forward-looking assessment of the prospects for the future achievement of shared priorities by the council and other local partners.
 - Inspectorates will gather evidence from a range of sources – including the national indicator set – throughout the year. CAA will draw as far as possible on the information used by councils and partners to manage their own performance – taking full account of self-assessments. The inspectorates will only undertake additional work to fill evidence gaps where necessary. The evidence base will be updated throughout the year.
- The proposals envisage a streamlined framework involving two assessments:
 - The **area assessment** – a qualitative assessment of prospects for improvement. Performance data for the majority of indicators in the National Indicator Set will be available from Spring 2009 and will be a source of evidence for area and organisational assessments. They will provide information about inequalities, progress towards targets and improvement, as well as informing the assessment of performance or priority issues. For each indicator, the council's performance will be compared with established comparator groups or those facing similar challenges, with particular attention given to those indicators contained in our LAA, comparison of which will be made with other areas where the same indicators have been selected as priorities.

The assessment will focus around three overarching headings:

- ◆ How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
- ◆ How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
- ◆ What are the prospects for future improvements?

It will be reported as a narrative and flags will be used to draw attention to performance issues and innovative practice. A red flag will indicate that significant concerns about outcomes, performance or future prospects are not being adequately addressed. A red flag would not be raised if the

council and its partners are effectively tackling the issue. Green flags will indicate where others have something to learn from innovative or exceptional success in an area.

The area assessment will evolve, to tell a story of the place over time. In the first year of CAA a baseline will be set using available evidence. In future years, the focus will be on what has changed.

- A scored **organisational assessment** for all councils (alongside organisational assessments for other partners e.g. PCT health check). Each organisational assessment will comment directly on the performance of key local council services. It will comprise of two assessments:
 - ◆ *Managing performance* - a joint inspectorate judgement focussing on how well the council is delivering services, outcomes and sustainable improvement in local priorities. There will no longer be a separate direction of travel assessment; the elements of the direction of travel assessment that remain relevant to CAA have been incorporated in the new managing performance theme. The Council will be assessed on how effective it is at:
 - identifying and delivering priority services, outcomes and improvements;
 - providing the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvements;
 - contributing to improving wider community outcomes; and
 - tackling inequality and improving outcomes for people in vulnerable circumstances.
 - ◆ *Use of Resources* - the Audit Commission has already published the methodology for this assessment separately.
- CAA will change the way inspectorates engage locally - moving from rolling programmes of on-site inspection (apart from for children in public care and safeguarding and for Youth Offending teams) to an on-going relationship with local areas. The Inspectorates will look for high quality local performance management data, take account of any locality self-assessments and only undertake inspection activity where necessary, triggered by the area and organisational assessments.