

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT BRIEFING

1. What is CAA?

Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is a new approach to assessing the performance of local public services in an area. Enshrined in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 it will replace Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) from April 2009.

Whereas CPA focused on services provided by local authorities, CAA will look at the public services in an area delivered by councils, the Police, Primary Care Trust, Fire and Rescue Services and private and voluntary sectors. CAA will directly affect all local public services.

For the first time, local public services will be judged collectively on the impact they have on bringing about better local outcomes. In looking at outcomes CAA will pay particular attention to those most at risk of disadvantage or inequality.

CAA will:

- provide a catalyst for better local outcomes, more effective partnership working, more responsive services and better value for money
- focus on joint working between councils and their partners in delivering the area's priorities, as agreed in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Sustainable Community Strategy
- focus on how the quality of people's lives is improved
- seek to highlight best practice and innovation
- identify any barriers to improvement
- provide information to local people about their local services, thereby increasing their awareness of the services available to them, empowering them to make better decisions and get value for money.

The final CAA framework will be published by the Audit Commission in February 2009.

2. What is involved?

CAA will have two main elements which will inform each other:

a) The Area Assessment

This looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people in local priorities, such as health, economic prospects and community safety, and how likely they are to improve in the future.

The assessment will focus on 3 main questions:

1. How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
2. How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
3. What are the prospects for future improvements?

The area assessment will take the Local Area Agreement as its starting point, but it will look more widely at outcomes for local people and other inspection evidence. The Sustainable Community Strategy, Housing strategy, Core strategy, the local Compact and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment will be key documents.

Other available evidence includes:

- views of service users including residents, third sector organisations like HAVCO and local businesses in the area
- self-evaluation and local performance management information including monitoring of local priorities
- National Indicator Set and other nationally available data

While not a requirement of the CAA, the Audit Commission is expecting local partners to develop a local self assessment which should be signed off by the Haringey Strategic Partnership. This is to facilitate a shared assessment of the needs and issues in the area, progress against priorities and outstanding challenges. It will allow the Haringey Strategic Partnership to take stock and take action where necessary to ensure it is on course to achieving outcomes for local citizens.

The area assessment will be reported on annually and will provide an overview of: key priorities; overall successes and challenges; summary of prospects.

At present a flag system is proposed to score the area assessment.

- **Red flags** will be used to indicate that current arrangements are inadequate to deliver improvements but will only be given where inspectorates are not satisfied that sufficient corrective action is being taken. There will be a challenge procedure for red flags, details of which will be published at a later date.
- **Green flags** will only be given for exceptional or innovative practice. Non-awarding of green flags will not be able to be challenged.

Where concerns are identified the Audit Commission will consider how well partners, collectively and individually, are responding to them. When 'flagging' an issue it is possible that a range of partners will be identified as being responsible for taking specific improvement activity or that one partner is singled out for responsibility.

b) The Organisational Assessment

This will involve the organisational assessments of individual public bodies within an area. It will be composed of:

i) Use of Resources (UoR) consisting of three themes:

- managing finances
- governing the business
- managing resources

The use of resources assessments will be similar across councils, PCTs, Police and Fire and Rescue Services. It is based on key lines of enquiry across three themes, which are assessed and scored by the auditor. How well organisations achieve value for money will be assessed across all the themes in the UoR. The three themes will be brought together by the Audit Commission into a single use of resources score to enable comparability in the use of resources scores across sectors.

ii) Performance:

- Council - UoR plus **Managing Performance**
- Fire - UoR plus **Managing Performance**
- PCT - UoR plus **Annual Health Check**
- Police - UoR plus **APACS** (assessments of Policing And Community Services)

The other element of the organisational assessment for councils and fire and rescue services is the managing performance theme. This theme focuses on the organisation's ability to deliver services, improvements in priorities and outcomes that are important to local people.

PCTs and the Police will have different forms of assessment linked to the separate performance frameworks for the National Health Service and police authorities respectively. Other local organisations such as housing associations and probation boards are also subject to inspection frameworks but will not receive a use of resources assessment. While all HSP partners will be involved in the area assessment not all will be subject to an organisational assessment. See the separate briefings for details of what CAA means for different agencies such as the Police, Housing providers, Fire and Rescue Services and the PCT.

Each CAA organisational assessment will be reported in a single short report and will be published with the area assessment. The first of these will be in November 2009. The evidence for the area and organisational assessments will be gathered and updated throughout the year.

3. Will inspections continue?

Although reduced in volume, inspection will continue to be an important feature of public service regulation and assessment. An inspection will be triggered where:

- performance or improvement levels are not satisfactory, are declining or are insufficiently clear;
- where the service, outcome or service user groups have been identified as being subject to significant risk;
- where ministers have given directions for an inspection to take place.

Inspection and regulation of institutions providing some direct services will continue after 1 April 2009. For example, Ofsted will continue to inspect early years settings, schools, colleges and children's homes, and the new Care Quality Commission will inspect adult social care homes and hospitals. Findings from these inspections will be reflected as appropriate in the area assessment and the organisational assessment.

4. What is the timetable for CAA?

- **February 2009:** final CAA framework document to be published, plus analysis of responses to the July 2008 CAA consultation.
- **February 2009:** final CPA annual performance assessments published.
- **April 2009:** start of CAA.
- **November 2009:** first set of CAA results to be published.

5. Where can I find out further information about CAA?

- The Audit Commission: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/>
- IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency): <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8811984>
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk>
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) <http://www.navca.org.uk/>
- NHS: http://www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk/docs/caa_roadshow_200719%5B1%5D.pdf
- Ofsted: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Consultations/Comprehensive-area-assessment-proposals-for-assessing-local-authority-services-for-children-and-young-people>