

WHAT CAA MEANS FOR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

For the fire and rescue service, all audit and inspection activity will be undertaken within the context of the CAA framework.

Figure 1 below sets out the proposed framework for the model of assessment of fire and rescue services within CAA. The managing performance theme will be tailored to reflect the specific performance and service delivery priorities within the sector and will draw on a new sector led peer assessment of operational service delivery. This will be based on a new operational assessment of service delivery toolkit, which is currently being developed by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the fire and rescue sector. Fire and Rescue services will assess their own performance using this toolkit and their assessment will be subject to peer review. Where a service has had this robust peer assessment the Commission will use it as evidence in the organisational assessment, of the fire and rescue service and the area assessment.

Figure 1
Proposed model for fire assessment



Source: Audit Commission

Area Assessment

While the three main questions of the area assessment will be applied collectively to the local partners, there are specific areas where the fire and rescue services have an important contributory role. These include:

- engaging more effectively with local communities to build up a comprehensive risk profile for the area;
- involving local communities in developing fire prevention and protection priorities;
- engaging effectively, ensuring that partners are engaged in larger scale emergencies, civil contingency and local resilience;
- delivering any fire-specific priorities within the Local Area Agreement; and
- contributing to broader local priorities, like tackling anti-social behaviour in an effective, well coordinated and prioritised way.

In relation to the fire service the Audit Commission will draw on the range of evidence including:

- the organisational assessment
- performance data in the National Indicator Set
- the conclusions from the peer assessment of operational service delivery
- nationally available fire data

Organisational Assessment

a) Use of resources

The assessment of the managing resources theme will be introduced on a staged basis for fire and rescue services and will subsequently be carried out on the basis of risk. It is not envisaged assessing annually how the organisation manages its natural resources, physical assets and people to meet current and future need. However, this theme will be of considerable importance within the fire sector. The Audit Commission will look at workforce development issues, many of which remain a challenge to the sector. Progress made with embedding equalities and diversity in the service, developing and training fire-fighters, improving shift patterns, and managing sickness absence will all be relevant. It will also be assessing how well the fire and rescue authority manages environmental risks, and reduces the use of natural resources such as energy and water.

b) Managing performance

The managing performance assessment for the fire and rescue service has been designed to provide an effective assessment of fire and rescue services performance. This approach enables the Audit Commission to assess the extent to which fire and rescue services are delivering against the National Framework, balancing effectively their prevention, protection and response functions.

The managing performance theme has two key lines of enquiry:

- How well is the fire and rescue service delivering its priority services, outcomes and improvements that are important to local people?
- Does the organisation have the leadership, capacity, and capability it needs to deliver future improvement?

In undertaking the managing performance assessment, the Audit Commission will draw on a range of evidence, including the new peer assessment of operational service delivery.

CAA Leads will be supported in their work with fire and rescue services by the Audit Commission's regionally based fire team, which comprises seconded senior fire officers and Audit Commission staff with significant expertise in the fire sector.

Reporting the organisational assessment

The report will encompass how effective the organisation is in:

- delivering against the priorities and objectives in the National Framework;
- demonstrating measurable impact from its fire prevention and community protection activities;
- operational preparedness and delivering an emergency response where both public and fire-fighter safety are paramount;
- resilience and large scale civil protection arrangements which are tested for effectiveness;
- contributing to the Local Area Agreement outcomes and regional arrangements; and
- delivering value for money in the use of resources.

The draft key lines of enquiry (KLOE) for the managing performance theme can be found at: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/downloads/CAAConsultation08.pdf>

What does it mean for the Fire and Rescue Service?

CAA provides a mechanism to ensure that the needs of the local population are met through agencies working closely together to deliver improved outcomes. CAA will act as a catalyst for public bodies to deliver better outcomes for local people and better value for public money.

Further details about the CAA can be found at the Audit Commission website: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/>