



Comprehensive Area Assessment Framework document

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Introduction

- 1 Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is the new framework for the independent assessment of local public services in England. This document sets out how CAA will be delivered from April 2009.
- 2 The inspectorates^I responsible for this document have been jointly commissioned to work together to develop and implement a methodology to deliver CAA and make the other necessary changes in assessment and inspection arrangements to implement the ambitions and commitments of the Local Government White Paper: [*Strong and Prosperous Communities*](#).^{II}
- 3 This White Paper set out proposals for a new performance framework for local services. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 put the legal framework for many of these proposals in place, including CAA. As inspectorates we have worked together, and with local service commissioners and providers, to develop CAA. Since November 2007 we have consulted extensively on the principles and overall approach and have tested it through action learning and trialling.^{III} We have also consulted citizens and people who use local services about what they want from CAA.
- 4 Around £200 billion of public money is spent on providing local public services each year in England. CAA is an important part of assessing and reporting on how well this money is spent, and making sure that local public bodies are accountable to the public for their service quality and impact. As well as providing information for local people, CAA will give government an overall picture of how well councils and their partners are doing in delivering key national and local priorities.^{IV} It will also provide constructive challenge and feedback to local service bodies to support their improvement efforts.

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- I** The inspectorates (Audit Commission, Commission for Social Care Inspection, Healthcare Commission, HMI Constabulary, HMI Prisons, HMI Probation and Ofsted) have developed CAA together. In April 2009, the Care Quality Commission will take over from the Commission for Social Care Inspection, Healthcare Commission and Mental Health Act Commission. In this framework document, 'we' refers to these inspectorates.
- II** Joint Ministerial Commissioning Letter, 3 April 2007.
- III** [Further information and links to websites discussed in this framework can be found on the Audit Commission website.](#)
- IV** Where we use 'councils' we mean principal local authorities; that is district, county and single-tier councils, but not town and parish councils (although we would expect these to have a significant role through community engagement).

- 5 CAA represents a fundamental change in our approach to inspection, reflecting the changes in local public services in recent years and in the environment in which they work. Since 2002, the performance of local public bodies has improved and they are increasingly working together to deliver further improvements. Independent assessments have been a catalyst for, as well as providing objective evidence of, this improvement. Local services have developed stronger performance management, more effective sharing of good practice and practical support for services in difficulty.
- 6 These improvements are very significant but it is also clear that examples of serious service failure have not been eliminated and there can be no room for complacency. There remains an important role for independent assessment especially to provide assurance on the quality and safety of key services such as health, adult social care and children's services. Important too are our judgements about how well local services are providing value for money at a time of great pressure on public spending.
- 7 CAA provides an independent assessment of how well people are being served by their local public services. It focuses on how well these services, working together, are achieving improvement and progressing towards long-term goals. At its heart is a new area assessment in which the inspectorates will provide their joint view on the short, medium and long-term prospects for better results for local people. This will be linked to assessments of the performance and value for money provided by the individual public bodies serving the area carried out by the relevant inspectorates. This document deals in detail with the area assessment and the organisational assessment of local councils. The assessments of NHS organisations, police authorities and forces, fire and rescue authorities, probation boards and prisons are described in the related frameworks of the relevant inspectorates.
- 8 The area assessment will draw on the detailed work of the inspectorates in their core areas of activity, the views of local people, people who use local services and other stakeholders, the new National Indicator Set and the information being used to manage public services locally. It will address local priorities and will always include a specific focus on people, including children and young people, who may experience disadvantage in accessing public services and whose personal circumstances make them most vulnerable.

- 9 The framework for CAA set out in this document defines the principles we will apply and explains how we will gather evidence to inform the area assessments, and the organisational assessment for each council. It also explains the relationship between the two types of assessment and how they will be reported. The framework clarifies how we will use these assessments to identify where inspection or other support for improvement is necessary, and how CAA will evolve over time.
- 10 The CAA approach allows the inspectorates to take account of rapid changes in the external environment in assessing the prospects for better outcomes locally. For example, the area assessments for 2009 will reflect the action being taken locally to mitigate the effects of the current economic downturn, and will take into account any impact on local priorities.
- 11 By refocusing our inspection effort as set out in this framework and the associated frameworks for individual services, we aim to deliver the required level of assurance on inherently high risk services, further reduce the assessment burden on high performing public bodies, act as a catalyst for better partnership working at the local level and support local accountability by providing clear information to local people.
- 12 This document is in two parts:
 - Part one: An executive summary.
 - Part two: The detailed framework setting out what we will do, how we will do it and how we will report our assessments.

Part one

Executive summary

- 13 People deserve clear and impartial information about how well they are being served by their local public services, how that compares with elsewhere, and what the prospects are for the improvement of quality of life in their area. This information will help people to hold elected representatives and those providing local public services to account for their performance and use of public money. It will help people make informed choices and influence local decisions.
- 14 From April 2009 CAA will provide:
 - a catalyst for improvement: better local outcomes, more effective partnership working, more responsive services and better value for money;
 - independent assurance for citizens, service users and taxpayers;
 - an independent evidence base for central government on progress with national priorities and improving local services; and
 - a means of focusing, rationalising and coordinating inspection.
- 15 Individual assessment regimes will continue to provide assurance on the performance of services meeting the needs of people whose circumstances make them vulnerable (for example, inspection of care services and safeguarding arrangements for children and adults) and other services dealing with inherently high risks (such as probation services). In addition, and for the first time, we will bring together our work to provide an overview of how successfully local organisations are working individually and together to improve their area. Local services increasingly work through formal arrangements, such as children's trusts, care trusts, crime and disorder reduction partnerships and others, with local strategic partnerships coordinating overall. CAA will allow us to reflect how well these, and less formal joint working, are improving outcomes for local people.
- 16 An illustrative example of how we will report our findings can be found at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caademo/>. We will also publish the detailed guidance we give our staff responsible for carrying out CAA.

- 17 What matters locally varies from place to place. Led by locally-elected councillors, councils and their local partners have developed sustainable community strategies to set out the local challenges and agreed priorities for their areas and how they plan to achieve sustainable development.^I In addition, they have agreed with central government new local area agreements (LAAs) setting out improvement targets up to March 2011 for those issues that are most important locally and important to government.^{II} Longer-term goals are set out in sustainable community strategies and local development frameworks. In CAA we will consider progress towards achieving local priorities, in relation to these different timescales.
- 18 Government has also introduced a set of national indicators to reflect its priority outcomes delivered by councils alone or with partners and to provide a consistent way of measuring progress. This National Indicator Set replaces a number of different information sets and simplifies and reduces the amount of performance data collected by government. CAA will report performance against the National Indicator Set, including the statutory education and attainment targets.
- 19 Examples of the issues being tackled by local partnerships include supporting the local economy; responding to the needs of the rapidly increasing proportion of older people; reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training; addressing shortages of affordable housing; improving environmental sustainability; reducing crime; preventing violent extremism; and tackling the causes of poor health. These issues are neither the preserve of any one public body nor issues for the state alone. They highlight the importance of effective local political leadership and governance, including purposeful engagement with local people whether as taxpayers, residents, service users, employers or volunteers.

I [Sustainable Community Strategies Guidance](#)

II LAAs will be the only vehicles for agreeing targets between local government and their delivery partners and central government (except for the statutory education and early years' targets). See Communities and Local Government, [Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance](#) for further information.

- 20 In this context, the current focus of inspectorates in assessing individual services and organisations is no longer sufficient. The power of CAA to support improving outcomes in an area will come from the added value of joining up the assessment of local services. CAA will focus on outcomes and how well local public bodies work with each other, the private and third sectors, other organisations working locally, including town and parish councils, and their local communities.¹ It will be forward looking and assess the prospects for future improvement. Individual inspection regimes will continue to provide assurance on the performance of services meeting the needs of people whose circumstances make them vulnerable (for example, inspections of care services and safeguarding services for children and adults).
- 21 Citizens expect local services to work together to make efficient and effective use of their collective resources to meet the needs and priorities of the community. They expect maximum value for their money and easy access to high quality and responsive services. Financial resources are under great pressure, making the search for efficiencies and value for money more critical than ever. CAA will provide independent assessment information to strengthen the ability of people to influence how services are provided and improved.
- 22 CAA will come into effect at a difficult time for the global and national economy and the effects are already being felt in local areas across England. With its emphasis on sustainable development, CAA has been designed to be flexible and adapt to such changes. We will judge how well councils and their partners understand the local impact of the recession and how well they are responding using the tools and influence available to them to mitigate the impact on their communities and prepare for the upturn. We will highlight examples of effective partnership working on the local economy as a source of learning for others, as well as highlight areas where inadequate action is being taken.

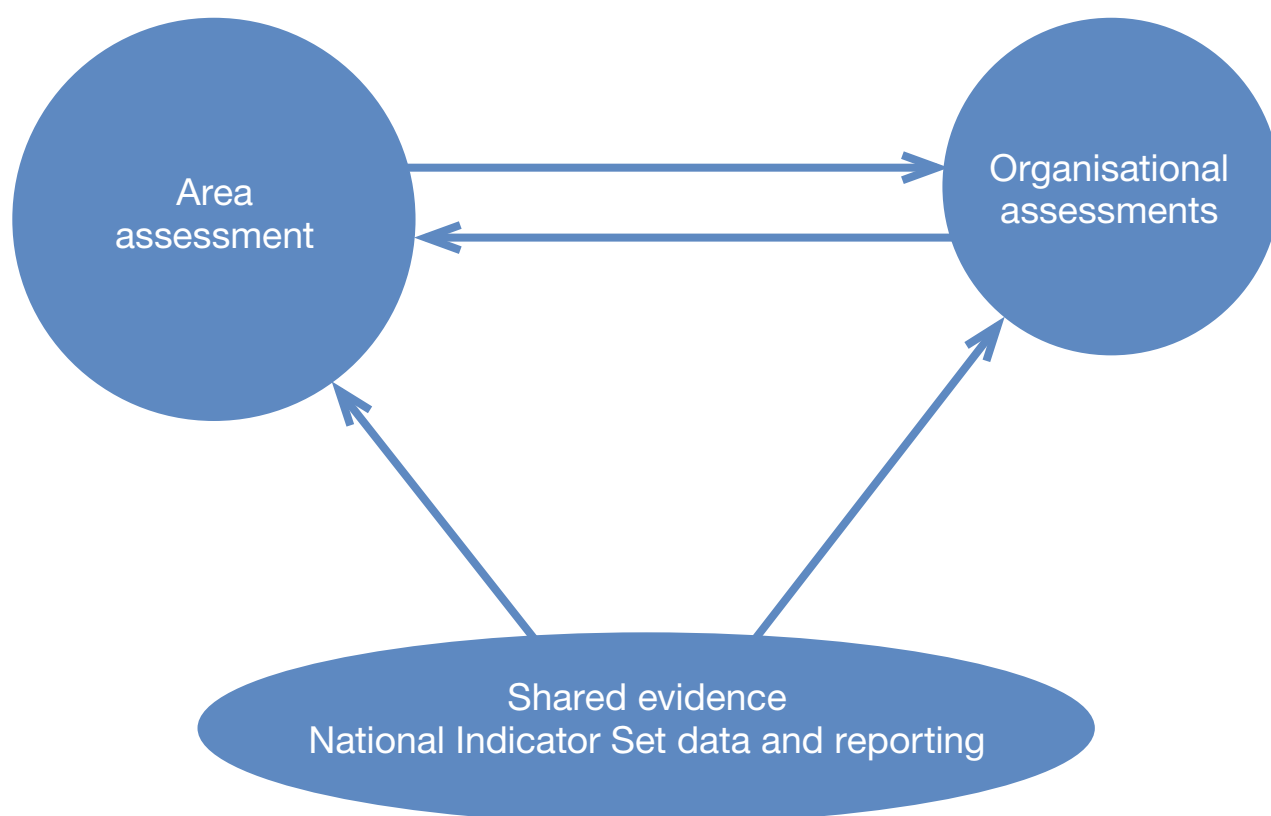
¹ By 'third sector' we mean voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals.

Framework overview

- 23 CAA is part of a new performance framework that is area based and focused on outcomes delivered by councils working alone or in partnership. It is designed to be more proportionate than previous frameworks and to be aligned with frameworks in other local service sectors. By bringing together evidence across different local services, CAA will be more effective in driving improvement than separate assessments for each sector can be.
- 24 CAA will have two main elements which will inform each other:
- an area assessment that looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people across the whole area, focusing on agreed priorities such as health, economic prospects and community safety, and how likely they are to improve in the future; and
 - organisational assessments for councils, combining the external auditor's assessment of value for money in the use of resources with a joint inspectorate assessment of council service performance.
- 25 The organisational assessments for the other main public bodies in each area are described in the respective frameworks for NHS organisations, police authorities and forces and fire and rescue authorities, and each of these include the external auditor's assessment of value for money.
- 26 For both elements we will use the performance reported against the National Indicator Set as a key source of evidence. We will also ensure that the links between the area assessment and the organisational assessments are managed so they support partnership and individual accountabilities.

Figure 1

The CAA framework



Area assessment

- 27 For the area assessment we will take the locally agreed priorities in the LAAs and the sustainable community strategies as our starting point. We will look at the prospects for future improvement in those outcomes that are most important, including over the longer term. We will take into account how well the local partners understand their local communities and reflect this in their priorities, as well as how well served local people are currently.

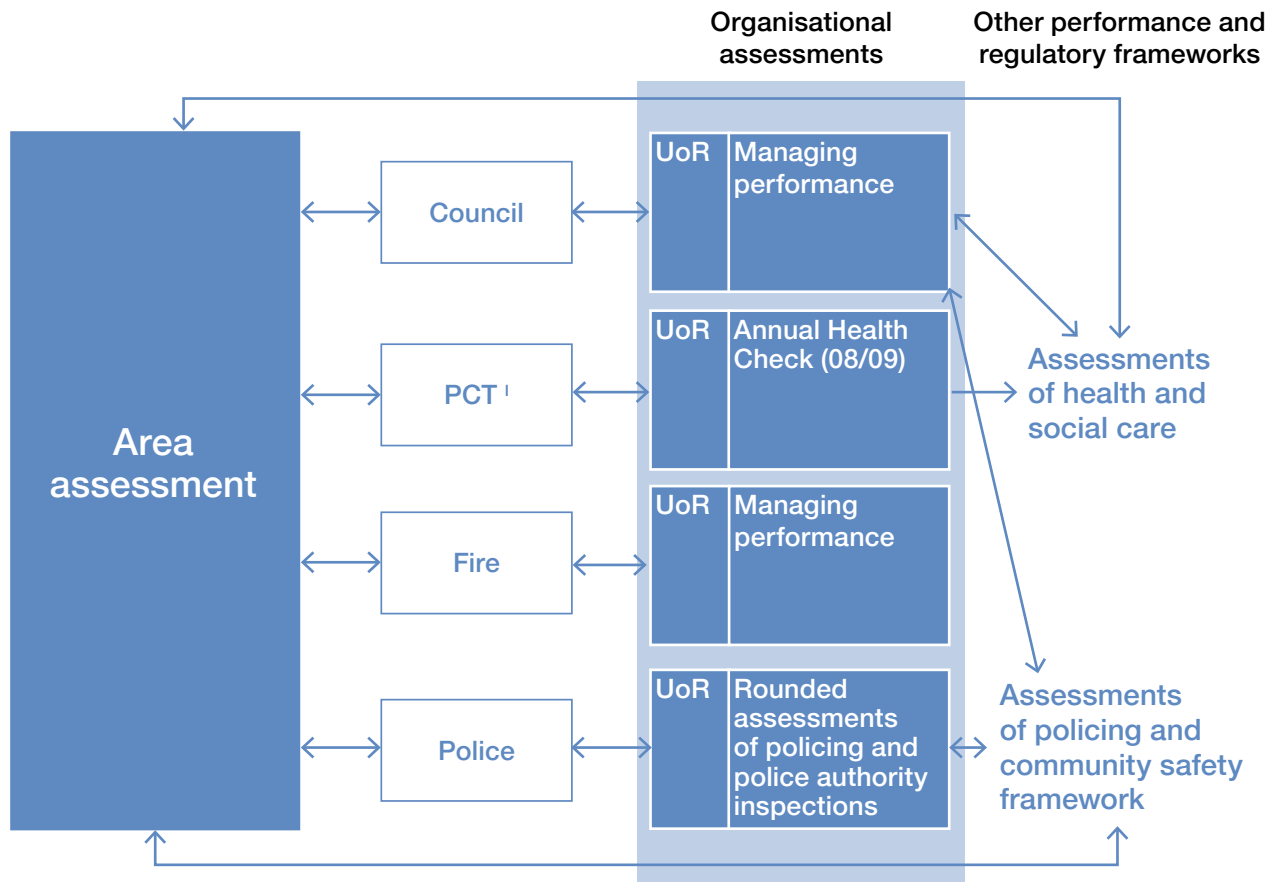
28 The area assessment will be reported as a narrative and will not receive a numerical score or other overall rating. If, in our view, the action being taken in the area to improve an important outcome is unlikely to deliver the improvement sought, we may highlight this as a significant concern using a red flag. Where we have identified exceptional performance or improvement, or promising prospects for improvement through innovation, we may highlight this as a source of learning for others using a green flag.

Organisational assessments

29 For councils, the organisational assessment will combine use of resources and managing performance themes into a combined assessment of organisational effectiveness scored on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest).

Figure 2

How CAA will align to other performance frameworks



Other local organisations such as housing associations and probation boards and trusts are also subject to inspection and assessment but do not receive use of resources assessments.

I National Indicators within Vital Signs Tier 3 will not be used to assess PCTs.

How we will carry out CAA and inspection

- 30 We will prepare our assessments using evidence from our other inspection work and draw on the information that is available nationally and that used locally as far as we can to avoid making extra demands on local services. We will apply the COUNT principle (collect once and use numerous times). CAA will not rely on the type of rolling programmes of major inspections, with detailed performance criteria and a focus on the corporate arrangements of local service organisations, used in previous assessment frameworks.
- 31 High performing organisations and partnerships delivering improvements in outcomes and value for money will receive less inspection. The more robust, relevant and timely the information being used to manage services locally, the less we as inspectorates will need to request additional information.
- 32 We will work with government offices in the regions, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and others to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting improvement. We will work together as inspectorates to plan and coordinate any inspections that are needed so that they can provide the assurance or improvement support desired without undue administrative impact on the inspected organisations.

Reporting CAA

- 33 Our aim is that our CAA reports become a valuable resource for local people, elected councillors, the local strategic partnership and local organisations, national government and others with an interest in the future of the area. Our findings will inform the discussions between the local strategic partnership and the government office for their region and future versions of the LAA. As inspectorates, we will use the knowledge gained through CAA to better target our future work and we will coordinate our activity to better manage the impact on local organisations and services.

Part two

The Comprehensive Area Assessment framework: What we will deliver

Area assessment

- 34 The area assessment takes the area's LAA and sustainable community strategies as its starting point, along with statutory education and attainment targets.¹ We look at local priorities, in the context of wider national themes. In some cases, it may identify important local issues that are not reflected in these agreed priorities. For example, poor performance in an important service area that has not been targeted for improvement may be identified. Similarly, we may identify situations where priorities have not been reviewed to reflect significant changes in circumstances, such as the economic downturn. As such, CAA will be helpful to the LAA review process in considering whether the priorities within it remain the most appropriate as well as providing an assessment on the prospects of achieving current targets and improvement priorities. Similarly, CAA can help local partnerships review and update their sustainable community strategies.
- 35 Our broad approach is to assess the future prospects in the area for achieving better outcomes by looking at the impact that local service organisations are collectively having on improving priority outcomes. Our assessment will therefore focus on the third of the following questions. The first two questions will provide underlying evidence and understanding to support our judgements on the third question.
- 36 To carry out the area assessment, we will consider three key overarching questions:
- How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
 - How well are outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
 - What are the prospects for future improvement?

¹ By 'area' we mean the area affected by any outcomes the council is delivering either alone, or in partnership with other public, third sector or business organisations.

- 37 We will produce area assessment reports for each of the 152 LAA areas, which will raise issues about particular districts, partnerships, neighbourhoods or wider regions where appropriate. Over time, we will build a fuller picture for each area and will increasingly be able to report on more localised issues. The assessment will, as needed, trace progress with agreed targets and issues in particular districts, urban neighbourhoods or rural communities, and cover multi-area agreements and sub-regional issues, as appropriate to each area.
- 38 We will focus our reports on the prospects for improvement and its sustainability and this will be shaped by our assessment of the first two key questions. For example, if local needs are not understood well enough, it is unlikely that the right improvement will occur in future. Similarly, if there is little evidence of improving outcomes over time, prospects for improvement are less likely to be promising.

Underpinning themes

- 39 Underpinning these three questions are themes that thread through the area assessment. These are:
- sustainability;
 - inequality;
 - people whose circumstances make them vulnerable; and
 - value for money.

Sustainability

- 40 CAA is inherently about sustainability. Sustainable development is as much about long-term social and economic benefit as it is about respecting environmental limits. It is about building a strong, healthy and just society. Sustainability considerations will be embedded within the three main area assessment questions which will look for evidence of genuinely integrated outcomes.

Tackling inequality, disadvantage and discrimination

- 41 Effective local public services target effort where improvement is most needed to tackle inequalities within and between communities. This may include focusing on the particular needs of people who are disadvantaged or discriminated against through age, disability, race, gender or trans-gender, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. It may also include efforts to reduce child poverty or other inequalities within communities. We will consider how well local partners know and understand the nature and extent of inequality and disadvantage within their communities and how effectively they are working to reduce or eliminate discrimination.

People whose circumstances make them vulnerable

- 42 People may be vulnerable because of their dependence on public services, (for example, because of illness, the need for care or support, or homelessness), because they are at risk of harm (for example, linked to substance abuse), or because they are marginalised or discriminated against in society. Some groups are at very high risk, such as people who need or are leaving care services, people with learning disabilities or people receiving mental health services.
- 43 As inspectorates, we have specific responsibilities in relation to people whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including children, and in relation to people who may make others vulnerable, such as offenders and people under probation supervision. We will pay particular attention in our assessments to people whose personal circumstances present a risk to themselves or to others. We will make sure that their needs are fully considered, including their needs for settled accommodation and employment. We will report clearly where their needs are not being met or where we have concerns about them being met in future, allowing for the different levels of risk and urgency associated with such circumstances.

Value for money

- 44 Providing value for money has always been important throughout public services and the increasing pressure on public spending means this will remain a high priority everywhere. The use of resources elements of organisational assessments place a significant focus on value for money and CAA will present an opportunity for us to take a broader view across organisations. The common approach to use of resources across councils, primary care trusts, police and fire services will support this. Where there are significant issues arising from this that relate to the wider use of resources to improve outcomes in an area, we will report on these in the area assessment.

The three key area assessment questions

- 45 The three key questions for the area assessment will enable us to build up our understanding of local priorities, how well they express community needs and aspirations and current performance and trends so that we can reach conclusions about the prospects for future improvement. Our judgements and reporting will be on these prospects, as described under the third question, and only on the preceding two questions by exception, where there is a direct link to improving outcomes.

How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?

- 46 Understanding how well local partners understand their communities and listen and respond to local people, including children, is central to the first question in the area assessment. Equally important is how well this understanding has been used to inform local priorities and therefore influence future prospects for improvement. We will review the evidence of how well this is done and the impact it is having in each area and, where we either have concerns or identify exceptional performance or improvement, we will probe further to support our judgements.

- 47 Understanding the needs and aspirations of communities should always include those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who are hardest to reach or hear. These people may have a greater need for public services than the population as a whole. We expect local services to be effective at giving a voice to people who are vulnerable or at greater risk of disadvantage and inequality, identifying their potential and supporting them to achieve the levels of choice, autonomy and improved outcomes that other citizens enjoy. This will vary according to the local context but it will specifically include groups at very high risk outlined in Paragraph 42 and will include groups which local partners have a requirement to consult and engage with under equality legislation.
- 48 Councillors lead and represent their communities and councils have a duty to involve local people and the organisations that represent them in decision making. Councils also need to have regard to the needs of local businesses and to engage them in developing local priorities. Other local services, including the police and NHS organisations, also have duties to engage with local people. Information from the Place Survey and the National Survey of Third Sector Organisations, introduced by government in 2008, will contribute to evidence on meeting the duty to involve. By considering how well local partners engage local people, CAA will assess how well these duties are carried out. It also seeks to encourage communities to take opportunities to influence local decisions and thus help enhance local democracy.
- 49 In reviewing the evidence, we will be looking at how effective engagement is, by understanding:
- how well councils and their partners know and engage with their communities, including children, and understand the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups;
 - the extent to which the priority outcomes for the area have been defined with the involvement of communities;
 - how well communities have been involved in assessing whether priority outcomes have been delivered; and
 - the effectiveness of local partners in coordinating community engagement and communicating the impact on their decisions.

- 50 We recognise that agreeing priorities, as well as being based on needs, is also a political process, and that for councils, decisions are made by locally elected politicians. We also recognise that decisions about priorities involve weighing up the diverse and complex needs and aspirations of many stakeholders, and a balance of short and longer-term needs. Our role is not to challenge legitimate political choice but to support democratic decision making by looking at how well these decisions have taken account of these needs and aspirations.
- 51 Local partners need to work together to engage local people in setting priorities as well as in developing, commissioning and delivering local services. Partners must make clear the purpose of any engagement activity and strengthen the capacity of the community to get involved. We may seek additional evidence, where appropriate, of whether good practice is followed in engaging with local people and the organisations that represent them. We may need to better understand the extent to which local partners:
- have sustainable arrangements, mechanisms and tools to engage local people, set priorities and improve the area and people's lives;
 - the extent to which these arrangements are coordinated across partnerships;
 - encourage empowerment, giving people a greater sense of influence over local decisions;
 - are sensitive to the particular communication or other needs which minority or marginalised groups have;
 - focus on outcomes for people who use services;
 - manage the risks of engagement activities for individuals, the council and its partners;
 - focus on value for money; and
 - feed back and make changes as a result of engagement and inform people of these.
- 52 We may also consider the quality of engagement through visits, for example to neighbourhood forums and citizen panels, and from evidence from third sector partners on the local strategic partnership including Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) and third sector groups and organisations.

- 53 Different areas use different approaches to understanding and tackling priorities. CAA will not prescribe one way of working over another, but it will make an independent assessment of the impact of actions taken to meet local needs and improve people's quality of life.

How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?

- 54 Assessing current and recent performance is a critical first step to looking ahead to the future. Government, the public and local public service users need assurance on how well local public services are performing. Independent assessment provides this assurance. Councillors and the governing bodies of other local services can use independent assessment to support their role in holding local services to account. Third sector organisations and local business also have an interest in how their local services are performing. By answering this question we will give an overview of how well local partnerships are delivering their priorities.
- 55 If there is evidence that performance is a concern in one or more important outcome areas or that it represents significant success or innovation, we will say this in our assessments, whether it is covered by the LAA or not. Some outcomes, such as improving the local economy or transport, are best addressed by neighbouring organisations working together. Where a responsibility exists to assess certain outcomes, as with children's services and social care, these assessments will always inform the area assessment. We will also reflect important developments since the LAA was first agreed such as the action being taken to mitigate the local impact of the economic downturn.
- 56 Robust assessment of performance must be based on an understanding of the range of performance that a single indicator may hide. For example, inequality may be masked by averaging out data into a single measure. Some information on rates of inequality is available from national data but councils and their partners need to understand the importance of diversity and reducing inequalities in their communities, and monitor the impact of their work in reducing inequality regularly. This may apply to geographical variations as well as inequalities between different sections of communities. We will look at how well inequality is identified and how quickly it is being reduced where need is greatest.

What are the prospects for future improvement?

- 57 This question draws on the conclusions from the previous two questions and reflects the main purpose of the area assessment. Our reporting and judgements will focus mainly on the prospects for future improvement.
- 58 Effective partnership working is vital to improving outcomes. As well as the local strategic partnership, this also includes, for example, children's trusts, crime and disorder reduction partnerships and multi-area agreements. Inspectorates will, through the evidence used for CAA, need to be satisfied that partnership working is effective at managing and improving outcomes but we will not routinely inspect partnership arrangements themselves. We will instead use the joint inspectorate evidence to assess whether we consider that local partnership working is likely to achieve the agreed local priority outcomes and this will inform our overall judgements. We will look at evidence of the capacity and capability of partners to identify where weaknesses in partnership working represent a barrier to improved outcomes, or where innovative or excellent partnership working is delivering results. The few rolling inspection programmes that government approves (see Paragraph 155 to 158) will look at any partnership arrangements relevant to their scope. We will inspect partnership arrangements further only where there are serious concerns that priority outcomes are not being achieved or if other serious governance issues emerge.

Green and red flags

- 59 The area assessment is not scored. To provide a clear indication of either significant concerns about future improvement or to highlight exceptional performance or improvement, we will use red and green flags. Feedback from the public, government and others has welcomed these clear statements of our views on our most significant judgments in each place. They will signal where extra support or inspection may be needed and where organisations may learn from the success of others.
- 60 Reflecting that CAA will be bespoke to each area and that each area will have its own priorities, there is no set list against which outcomes may be flagged. Flags may be reported regarding particular LAA or statutory targets, groups of cross-cutting or linked indicators or wider themes as set out in Paragraph 127. We do not anticipate reporting a large number of red or green flags for any area, but we will not set quotas.

- 61 Green flags represent exceptional performance or outstanding improvement which is resulting in proven delivery of better outcomes for local people that are sustainable and which we consider others could learn from. Good or very good practice is not sufficient. Nor is rapid improvement that we are not confident can be sustained. We will also use green flags to highlight innovative practice that has promising prospects of improving outcomes for local people that we consider others can learn from.
- 62 We will report a red flag where there are significant concerns about outcomes and future prospects for outcomes, which are not being tackled adequately. A red flag means that inspectorates have jointly judged that something different or additional needs to happen to improve outcomes.
- 63 We are likely to report a red flag where one or more of the following applies and where not enough is being done to tackle the concern:
- performance is poor, slipping or not improving;
 - service or outcome standards are unacceptable;
 - improvement is not on track to achieve a target;
 - locally agreed priorities do not reflect evident and pressing need;
 - insufficient account is being taken of inequality; and
 - insufficient account is being taken of people whose circumstances make them vulnerable or who are at risk of avoidable harm.
- 64 Because a red flag reflects significant concerns about the prospects for improvement, not current performance, before awarding one we will consider whether:
- the local partnership is aware of the concern;
 - plans to improve the areas of weakness are robust and if there is evidence of improvement; and
 - significant weaknesses or failings, such as poor governance, are likely to prevent sustained improvement.

- 65 It is important to note that a deteriorating outcome will not necessarily trigger a red flag. For example, if in our view a local partnership or the accountable partner body is taking effective action to mitigate the impact of the economic downturn (perhaps helping to keep the local increase in worklessness below the level being experienced in similar places elsewhere), a red flag would not be reported.
- 66 Red and green flags are not the opposite of each other. They each have their own distinct purpose and criteria. We are developing a formal procedure to allow challenge to the reporting of red flags. However, we do not intend that the non-award of green flags will be subject to challenge. We will publish our formal approach to challenges by 31 March 2009.
- 67 Judgements about places will touch on sensitive issues such as partnership approaches to preventing violent extremism and counter terrorism. We will report our findings with great care to avoid increasing existing risks or exacerbating community tension. We will give clear feedback in our reporting to the local partners but we will consider carefully the impact of our public reporting and how it is presented. This will help ensure corrective action is maintained or improved without it being undermined.

Area assessment over time

- 68 CAA will build a fuller picture of each area over time and we will not cover everything each year. Red and green flags will be kept under review and will be removed from our reports when they are no longer relevant, normally when we publicly report again. To ensure a proportionate approach is maintained, we will not seek to carry out a complete reassessment of areas of concern (either red flagged or potentially so), but will use the following approach to review change:

Initial red flag assessment	Future years:
What is the issue?	What is new or has changed?
What is the scale of the impact?	Has it got better?
How serious is it?	Will it get better in the future?
Is it getting better?	
Will it get better in the future?	
What will help it get better?	

Initial green flag assessment	Future years
What is the issue?	Is the improvement of performance as noteworthy as the previous year?
What is the scale of the impact?	Is there anything new for others to learn from?
How helpful will the learning be to others?	

Organisational assessments

- 69** Local public service organisations are assessed by different inspectorates and in ways which reflect the context and organisation of each service sector. The form of organisational assessments therefore varies and these are set out in the relevant performance frameworks for each sector. These assessments will both inform and be informed by CAA. The contribution of each organisation to improving outcomes in the area will be directly reflected in its organisational assessment so that efforts are directed at improving outcomes, rather than organisational scores. This will work in two ways: if a flag in the area assessment highlights concerns or exceptional performance or improvement regarding the contributions of a specific partner, this will be reported in more depth in the relevant organisational assessment, and is likely to impact on the organisational assessment scores. Similarly, any concerns or positive indicators arising from the organisational assessment, which impact significantly on outcomes for the wider area or region will be reported in the area assessment and may result in a flag.
- 70** Assessing the effectiveness of councils is an integral part of CAA, because of its focus on the outcomes delivered through councils working alone or with partners. This section sets out the organisational assessment for councils, then summarises the arrangements for other sectors, (police, fire, health) with links to more details. The Audit Commission's use of resources assessment will contribute to the organisational assessments in local government, primary care trusts, police and fire and rescue services. Organisational assessments will provide assurance to the public and to government that local services are delivering priorities and improving key services.

- 71 In May 2008, the Audit Commission published details of the [use of resources assessments](#) to be made in 2009 with an update in February 2009 to incorporate the scoring arrangements.¹ This sets out how the work of appointed auditors under the statutory Code of Audit Practice will be translated into a scored use of resources assessment. The approach taken will be similar across councils, primary care trusts, police and fire and rescue services. It is based on key lines of enquiry assessed across three themes:
- managing finances;
 - governing the business; and
 - managing resources.
- 72 The arrangements for scoring the use of resources assessment have now been confirmed following consultation and are summarised for each sector below.
- 73 A formal procedure will allow challenge to the overall organisational assessment scores and we will publish details of this by 31 March 2009.

Organisational assessment of councils

- 74 We will assess the effectiveness of each council through an assessment of how well each organisation delivers value for money in the use of resources and how well it manages its performance. We will publish a single short report that includes an overall score for each organisation alongside the area assessment. Our published guidance for staff will contain more information about how the key lines of enquiry will be applied.

¹ [Use of Resources 2008/09: Overall Approach and Key Lines of Enquiry](#), Audit Commission, May 2008

Organisational assessment for councils		
	Theme	Key lines of enquiry
Use of resources	Managing finances How effectively does the organisation manage its finances to deliver value for money?	Does the organisation plan its finances effectively to deliver its strategic priorities and secure sound financial health? Does the organisation have a sound understanding of its costs and performance and achieve efficiencies in its activities? Is the organisation's financial reporting timely, reliable and does it meet the needs of internal users, stakeholders and local people?
	Governing the business How well does the organisation govern itself and commission services that provide value for money and deliver better outcomes for local people?	Does the organisation commission and procure quality services and supplies, tailored to local needs, to deliver sustainable outcomes and value for money? Does the organisation produce relevant and reliable data and information to support decision making and manage performance? Does the organisation promote and demonstrate the principles and values of good governance? Does the organisation manage its risks and maintain a sound system of internal control?
	Managing resources How well does the organisation manage its people, natural resources and physical assets, to meet current and future needs and deliver value for money?	Is the organisation making effective use of natural resources? Does the organisation manage its assets effectively to help deliver its strategic priorities and service needs? Does the organisation plan, organise and develop its workforce effectively to support the achievement of its strategic priorities?
Managing performance	Managing performance How well does the organisation manage and improve its services and contribute to wider community outcomes?	How well is the organisation 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 improvements?

- 75 For councils with responsibility for children's services and social care, we will jointly agree the managing performance and overall organisational assessment score. The Audit Commission, the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted directly assess council services so these inspectorates will contribute most evidence to these assessments. The Audit Commission will make the overall assessment for district councils, taking account of relevant evidence from other inspectorates, including from HMI Constabulary in relation to community safety and from the Tenant Services Authority in relation to housing.
- 76 The organisational assessments will:
- support and complement the area assessment's focus on priority outcomes;
 - ensure accountability at an organisational level, including contributions to delivering LAAs and wider sub-regional or regional strategies, including multi-area agreements;
 - bring together contributions from inspectors and auditors to provide a rounded assessment of organisational effectiveness;
 - inform and focus improvement planning, including inspection programming; and
 - help the public hold their local public bodies to account.

Managing performance

- 77 In assessing the managing performance theme and key lines of enquiry, we will focus on how effective the organisation is at:
- identifying and delivering priority services, outcomes and improvements;
 - improving the services and outcomes for which it is responsible;
 - contributing to improving wider community outcomes, including those set out in formal agreements such as LAAs or multi-area agreements;
 - tackling inequality and improving outcomes for people whose circumstances make them vulnerable; and
 - providing the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvements.
- 78 Each council organisational assessment will contain an explicit statement on the performance of key council services. For example, we will comment specifically on services provided for children and young people and adult social care.

- 79 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission continue to have statutory responsibilities for assessing performance of children and young people's services and adult social care. Each organisation will fulfil this responsibility through its contribution to CAA and will also publish more detailed findings separately. The results of these statutory assessments will be reported in the organisational assessment for councils and the outcomes reflected in the area assessments. These contributory assessments will carry significant weight in the collective decision about the managing performance theme score but this will be based on the local context and significance of the findings rather than a formula or rules based approach.
- 80 Ofsted will provide an annual grade of the performance of children's services (as required by the 2006 Education and Inspections Act) within the CAA organisational assessment, drawing from its inspection and regulatory work and the National Indicators covering the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes.^I It will contribute to the organisational assessments. See the [prototype web reporting tool](#), (explained in the 'Reporting CAA' section of this document) for an example of how this will look. Ofsted has outlined its arrangements for this in an accompanying [document](#).
- 81 The Care Quality Commission will assess the performance of the council's adult social care services in delivering outcomes. This assessment is based around the seven outcomes from the health White Paper *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say*.^{II} The framework also assesses the leadership and commissioning and use of resources for adult social care.
- 82 The Care Quality Commission's assessment of councils' delivery of adult social care outcomes will be reported, and used, as an integral part of the managing performance theme for the organisational assessment. The Care Quality Commission will use the four point scale in paragraph 89 to grade its assessment. An example of how this might look is set out in the [prototype web reporting tool](#). The Care Quality Commission's ungraded assessment of commissioning will also inform auditors assessments of use of resources.

I The five *Every Child Matters* outcomes are; be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

II The seven *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* outcomes are; improved health and emotional well-being, improved quality of life, making a positive contribution, increased choice and control, freedom from discrimination, economic well-being, and maintain personal dignity and respect.

- 83 We will not use rules to govern how an Ofsted or Care Quality Commission grade will impact on the overall managing performance score for councils. But if the graded judgement is in the lowest categories this will have a significant bearing on the overall managing performance score and therefore on the council score.

How CAA will take account of different types of local government

- 84 In areas with county and district councils, partnership arrangements are more complex than in areas with a single council. Most county and district councils each have separate local strategic partnerships and separate sustainable community strategies. For many services, the area on which the responsibility is based is different under county and district areas than those with only a single council. In these situations, effective partnership working within and across districts and between districts and the county council as well as with partners from other sectors is all the more important. We will take account of these additional complexities and inter-relationships and how effective they are will affect our conclusions about the prospects for improving outcomes and about individual organisations. We will look at how well these complexities are managed and being overcome locally to improve working between district and county councils and to improve accountability, leadership, efficiency and outcomes.
- 85 In these areas, many of the local services that are managed by the district council have a substantial impact on quality of life and outcomes. For example, tackling homelessness and strategic housing issues, crime and disorder reduction, planning, managing the quality and improvement of the local environment and provision of leisure and recreation facilities are all organised on district areas. District councils have a vital contribution to make to these and to both understanding and delivering wider outcomes in the area. We will reflect this contribution to local outcomes in the area assessments as well as taking them into account in the organisational assessments for district councils. Recognising this, the organisational assessments of district and county councils will be on the same footing for the first time, proportionate in scale and range to their relative functions.

- 86 In the same way, outcomes relating to housing markets, sub-national economic development, reducing transport congestion and climate change, are often sensibly tackled across a geographical area larger than any single council. Where there are potential benefits of councils and other partners working together to address these issues, we will take account of this in the appropriate organisational (and area) assessments. For example, where several areas have entered into a multi-area agreement, we will report specifically on contributions and overall delivery against the wider priorities and outcomes identified. We recognise the complexity around multi-area agreements and have been working with partnerships to explore how assessment and reporting can support improvement and delivery at this level. It is likely that in the first year of CAA we will undertake a piece of research work immediately after the first results are published to draw together the conclusions around multi-area agreements and sub-regional issues that we are able to draw based on our work throughout 2009. This is likely to be published in the first half of 2010.
- 87 We appreciate that in London and metropolitan areas the city-wide bodies are important partners to the London and metropolitan councils. We will work with both the city-wide bodies such as integrated transport authorities, and the individual councils, to ensure that relevant issues are taken fully into account as part of the area assessments.

Scoring the organisational assessment

- 88** The organisational assessment scores for managing performance and value for money in the use of resources will be combined into a single score using the table below. Where the managing performance theme score and the use of resources score are the same, the grade will simply be carried forward to become the overall organisational assessment score. A score of 1 in either the managing performance or the use of resources theme will lead to an overall organisational assessment score of 1. Beyond this, where the managing performance theme score and the use of resources score are different, we will use our professional judgement to decide the overall organisational assessment score between the options in the following table. This allows for more professional discretion in weighing up evidence and taking account of the local context in determining which themes should carry more weight. The overall score is shown in blue in the table.

Use of resources	Managing performance				
	Scores	1	2	3	4
	1	1	1	1	1
	2	1	2	2 or 3	2 or 3
	3	1	2 or 3	3	3 or 4
	4	1	2 or 3	3 or 4	4

- 89** The scores 1 to 4 represent the following descriptors of performance:

Overall [organisation x] performs poorly/adequately/well/excellently

1	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements	Performs poorly
2	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements	Performs adequately
3	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements	Performs well
4	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements	Performs excellently

- 90 The use of resources overall score will be calculated using an average of the scores for the three themes. There are circumstances when averaging an even number of key lines of enquiry within a theme will result in theme scores of 1.5, 2.5 or 3.5 so the Audit Commission has specified key lines of enquiry which will determine how the scores are rounded. For example, the score for the use of information key line of enquiry will be used for the governing business theme as it reflects the importance of having appropriate and reliable information to support good governance and effective decision making.

Organisational assessments of health services

- 91 The organisational assessments of NHS organisations to be published by the Care Quality Commission in 2009 will provide assessments on the quality of services (commissioning, including children's health), assessment of standards (provider services) and financial management. There will not be an overall use of resources score for primary care trusts in 2009. The equivalent organisational assessments for NHS trusts in 2009 will be of the quality of financial management, an assessment of national priorities and assessment of standards. The Care Quality Commission's assessments of the quality of financial management will use the Audit Commission's judgement in the 'managing finances' theme. The assessment of the quality of commissioning and provider services will also use evidence from the remaining two themes for its standards-based assessment wherever possible. This will reduce the risk of trusts being assessed twice for the same issue in the different frameworks.
- 92 World Class Commissioning (WCC), with its emphasis on healthy life expectancy, health inequalities, working with community partners and promoting improvement and innovation, aligns well with the overall policy direction of CAA. There are two specific areas where alignment will be key to the success of both processes. First is the extent to which the local WCC outcomes agreed with the strategic health authority are aligned with the LAA priorities. Second is the CAA assessment process itself.

- 93 We are committed to using any relevant information from other assessment processes such as WCC, and to ensuring the public receive a single, coherent story. The Care Quality Commission will work closely with CAA Leads and NHS organisations' auditors to achieve this.¹ We recognise it is important that NHS organisations are not assessed twice on the same issues, so clearly communicating how we will rely on each other's assessments will be important. For the 2008/09 use of resources assessment the Audit Commission will not include the commissioning and procurement key lines of enquiry but will rely on any output from WCC for CAA. In this way we believe that the two frameworks can feed each other. The Care Quality Commission and the Audit Commission are discussing with the Department of Health how further alignment between these assessments can be achieved in 2009/10.

Organisational assessments of police

- 94 From April 2009, HMI Constabulary's Rounded Assessment of police force performance will draw on the performance measures within the current Assessment of Policing and Community Safety data set. Through the CAA area assessment, we will make one assessment of community safety outcomes delivered by crime and disorder reduction partnerships in an area. That same assessment will be an integral component of HMI Constabulary's Rounded Assessment, providing the assessment of community safety outcomes delivered by the police working in partnership.

¹ The role of CAA Leads is explained in Paragraph 141.

- 95 From April 2009, for the first time, police authorities will be inspected jointly by HMI Constabulary and the Audit Commission across the full range of their activities. Inspections will provide objective assessments of how well individual police authorities are fulfilling their statutory functions. Inspections will probe:
- the effectiveness of the police authority's performance management, leadership and scrutiny role; and
 - how the police authority manages resources and people and how it works in collaboration with communities and partners to build capacity, ensuring the delivery of priority services, outcomes and improvements that are important to local people. The inspections will determine how the police authority promotes value for money, efficiency and productivity. The overall use of resources score will be determined in the same ways as for councils, set out in Paragraphs 89 and 90. Police authority inspections will dovetail with CAA, including use of resources assessments, and HMI Constabulary's Rounded Assessment of police force performance.
- 96 HMIC will continue to deliver programmed inspections in all police forces in England and Wales including those of protective services – such as counter-terrorism, tackling serious and organised crime and strategic roads policing – and in delivery of priorities identified in response to the Home Office policy statement *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing Our Communities Together*, published in November 2008.

Organisational assessments of fire and rescue services

- 97 The Audit Commission will base its assessment on the priorities and objectives set out in the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework, assessing the extent to which individual fire and rescue services are delivering against the framework, effectively balancing their prevention, protection and response functions. This will include considering how well equality and diversity are fully integrated into all aspects of the service. The Audit Commission will also assess the impact and effectiveness of the service's contribution to broader partnership outcomes in the LAA.
- 98 The Audit Commission has responsibility for providing explicit assurance and for appointing auditors for fire and rescue services. This includes the 15 fire and rescue services that are part of their respective county councils and 30 free-standing fire and rescue services. This responsibility will be met through the organisational assessment, using the same key lines of enquiry, focus and scoring approach, covering use of resources and managing performance, as for councils. The assessment will cover the specific areas of assurance that are required by the National Framework 2008-11 and relating to operational effectiveness and resilience to large scale emergencies.

How we will carry out CAA

- 99 CAA will focus on outcomes and assess the effectiveness of how well local public services work, together and individually, to improve outcomes for people.

Types of evidence

- 100 We will consider a wide range of evidence in forming our judgements, likely to include, but not limited to, the following:
- LAAs, sustainable community strategies and any other locally agreed targets;
 - the National Indicator Set and other nationally available data;
 - findings from inspection, regulation and audit, including relevant evidence from other performance frameworks;
 - local performance management information used to monitor local priorities including any self evaluations and evidence from scrutiny;
 - briefings or evidence from other agencies including the government offices in the regions, strategic health authorities, the Tenant Services Authority, the Homes and Communities Agency and regional development agencies; and
 - the views of people who use services including residents, third sector organisations and local businesses in the area.

The National Indicator Set

- 101 Performance data for 2008/09 will be available from spring 2009 for the new national indicators and will be an important source of evidence for both the area and organisational assessments. The national indicators will provide information about progress towards LAA and statutory targets and broader improvement and performance, including how far inequalities in outcomes are being reduced.
- 102 For each indicator, we will compare and report local performance against the national figure, established comparator groups of statistical neighbours and geographical neighbours. We will pay particular attention to those indicators adopted as LAA targets and statutory targets in each place and compare performance between areas where the same indicators have been selected as priorities.

- 103 To protect and support vulnerable people (including children and young people), some indicators have national minimum expectations or performance bands. We will reflect these in our comparative reporting for these indicators (see [prototype CAA reporting tool](#)).
- 104 We will also continue to use other robust national data sets that are available, such as the health profiles published for each council area annually and data from returns provided by each fire and rescue service, where these do not impose unnecessary additional administrative demands.

Evidence from inspection and regulation

- 105 We may use as evidence for area assessments and organisational assessments relevant findings from any inspection. This includes triggered inspections, rolling programmes such as Ofsted's three-yearly inspections of safeguarding and looked after children and HMI Probation's inspection of youth offending, and routine regulatory inspections.
- 106 Routine inspection and regulation of some services will continue after 1 April 2009. For example, Ofsted will continue to inspect early years' settings, schools, colleges, adult learning, children's homes, fostering and adoption services and is to introduce unannounced annual inspections of frontline social care practice. The Care Quality Commission will register health and social care providers, carry out reviews of health and social care commissioning and of providers, and protect the rights of people detained under the Mental Health Act 1983. The Tenant Services Authority will be preparing their regulatory framework for social housing in 2009 and this will be used in subsequent years to produce performance information at a local level.

Local performance information and self-assessment

- 107 Rigorous and regular self-assessment is a feature of effective organisations and partnerships. Good organisations and partnerships use it as part of their performance management to identify how well they know their communities, if outcomes are being improved, how effectively resources are used, and what needs to be done to sustain and further improve good performance. We will use the information that partnerships and organisations use to evaluate and manage their own performance wherever possible to help gauge how well performance is being managed in organisations and across areas.

- 108 Councils also have an important role in scrutinising local services and contributing to improving outcomes. Council overview and scrutiny committees not only hold the council executive to account but also consider matters that affect the local area or its citizens and have specific powers in relation to local health services. There is a two-way relationship between scrutiny and CAA. Scrutiny reviews carried out locally will provide valuable evidence that can feed in to CAA and may help inspectorates understand issues without having to carry out additional work. The findings from CAA will also be helpful to overview and scrutiny committees in identifying where they may wish to focus their attention and in providing them with helpful insights when conducting reviews. CAA is therefore of direct interest to elected councillors whatever position they hold, as community leaders on the executive or in holding the executive to account and representing local people.
- 109 Inspectorates do not require a new separate self-assessment for CAA. However, we support the approach being taken by the Improvement and Development Agency and the Local Government Association and others that encourages consistent partnership self-evaluation. The more robust the self-assessment, the more reliance we will be able to place on it.
- 110 In addition to self-assessment carried out for local performance management, there remains a statutory requirement for an annual review of the Children and Young People's Plans. Ofsted will, as far as possible, rely on this self-assessment rather than require an additional self-assessment for their statutory assessment of children's services. There is no equivalent to this for adult social care, so councils will still be asked for a self-assessment to inform this assessment in the first year of CAA and the Care Quality Commission will review this for future years.
- 111 As well as any self-assessment, inspectorates will draw evidence from key documents such as the *Sustainable Community Strategies*, *Housing Strategy*, *Local Development Framework*, *Children and Young People's Plan*, *Joint Strategic Needs Assessments*, *Community Safety Partnership Plan* and reports to, and minutes of, the local strategic partnership, children's trusts, council and scrutiny committees.

Views of people who use services, residents, businesses, community groups and other third sector organisations

- 112 The views and experiences of local people are key sources of evidence for CAA. We will draw on the findings of the new biennial Place Survey, the National Survey of Third Sector Organisations and the annual Business Survey. In addition, we will take account of the area's own evidence about users' views of local services. We expect this to include information about the views of: children and young people; those who may experience disadvantage in accessing public services; groups and individuals whose views are seldom heard; people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and the third sector.
- 113 We will also consider evidence provided by local citizens and service user groups, LINKs, Citizen's Advice Bureaux, the National Tenant Voice, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, members of parliament, the views of the local business community, and the Local Government Ombudsman and the Standards Board for England where it is available.

Other agencies

- 114 We will consider evidence and briefings from other agencies, for example using evidence from the Homes and Communities Agency about progress in improving housing and regeneration. HMI Prisons inspects a wide range of custodial facilities regularly and will provide evidence about the quality of local services provided to those held in these nationally managed institutions.
- 115 In considering its evidence, HMI Probation will scrutinise performance information provided by the Youth Justice Board.
- 116 Government offices in the regions, strategic health authorities and regional improvement and efficiency partnerships will provide information through regular contact with the Audit Commission CAA Lead and other inspectorates.

Use of evidence

- 117** We will take account of the latest available evidence, as far as possible. Subject to legal or confidentiality limits, quality assured evidence will be available to the organisations in the area so that it is clear what our assessments have relied on. We will collate and review evidence through a joint assessment system that will enable the inspectorates to share evidence and support the development of shared judgements. As far as is practical we will share this information with the local partners, this will support transparency around the evidence we use and how we have arrived at our judgements from it.
- 118** For area assessments and council organisational assessments, we will rely mainly on our shared inspectorate evidence base and knowledge gained from routine dealings with the council and other local partners. This will include evidence of the views of local people, including those who use local services. We will consider how effectively this information has been used alongside other evidence to identify priorities and to assess performance and where improvement is most needed. As far as possible, we will plan our work to minimise the administrative impact it has on the local service partners. The degree of accuracy and reliability of the information used locally will also be important in the extent to which we are able to rely on it and will therefore affect how much additional work we need to do. If we need further evidence or investigation on matters of relevance to both area and organisational assessments, we will try to make sure we address both in one go. This approach will apply to planning our audit work as well as other elements of CAA. We will only undertake additional investigation where we need to gather further evidence to make robust area or organisational assessments.

Our approach to quality assurance

- 119** The added value from the area assessment will derive from our ability to make more rounded and robust judgements about local outcomes and improvement through joint analysis and interpretation of information previously held separately by each inspectorate. Our joint analysis will enable us to:
- focus more clearly on the priorities that matter to local people rather than being constrained by organisational structures;
 - address cross-cutting issues where responsibilities are shared and better reflect the inter-relationships between outcomes and how well local partners are addressing these together; and
 - help identify new insights into the quality of services experienced by people that were previously unobtainable from the information held by any individual inspectorate.
- 120** Our aim is to integrate quality assurance at the earliest stages of the assessment to avoid over-reliance on retrospective review as we approach publication. This ‘right first time’ approach will mean that the inspectorates will quality assure the evidence, for which each has prime responsibility according to their own procedures before it is submitted for joint consideration. We aim to make our processes open, transparent, fair and equitable so that there is clarity about the evidence on which our assessments are based. We will also ensure our judgements are well supported by evidence and we will include input from people who use services and those responsible for local public services to strengthen credibility. We aim for high quality judgements that help improve services and outcomes and aid local democracy.
- 121** We will use an analytical framework to help us make best use of the information available to us; to help ensure that the new insights are identified; and to make sure that all relevant information available to the inspectorates is considered in relation to each issue. The framework will be underpinned by guidance on the quality and quantity of information needed to come to robust judgements and by processes to ensure that judgements are consistent (in other words, meaning that two different teams of inspectors would arrive at compatible judgements given the same information and context).

122 There are two stages in the analytical framework:

- first stage analysis of information by the individual inspectorates; and
- second stage, cross-sector analysis of inspectorates' information.

123 The first stage analysis will derive from inspectorates' own programmes of inspection, assessment and review. Each inspectorate will focus its analysis on the sector(s) it is responsible for, extended to include national information from other sectors and inspectorates where relevant (for example, linking indicators from the national indicator set).

124 The framework for the second stage analysis links inspectorates' (and other) information from different sectors to issues. Each piece of information may be linked to a number of issues so that the framework can be thought of as a web of linked hubs and spokes. The starting point for the framework will be the outcomes in the National Indicator Set, and the national indicators themselves. However, the framework will not be limited to pre-defined issues so that other, major cross-cutting issues may be identified.

125 The interpretation of the analyses leading to judgements about whether a flag, red or green, should be allocated to an issue is described in Paragraphs 59 to 67.

126 The first stage analysis will be subject to each inspectorate's own quality assurance processes and the second stage analysis will be subject to the quality assurance arrangements described in this framework.

127 At both stages, inspectorates will review all relevant evidence, considering implications for the area and organisational assessment. Using the themes below, inspectors will jointly assess evidence against national and local priorities, such as themes in sustainable community strategies, and report in the area assessment on those that matter most in each area:

- How safe is the area?
- How healthy and well supported are people?
- How well is adult social care meeting people's needs and choices? ¹
- How well kept is the area?
- How environmentally sustainable is the area?
- How strong is the local economy?
- How strong and cohesive are local communities?
- How well is housing need met?
- How well are families supported?
- How good is the well-being of children and young people? ¹

128 We recognise that many of these themes are linked and may feature in LAA priorities. We also know local services manage the links between these themes and take an integrated approach to delivering social, economic and environmental well-being.

129 The area assessment will report against local priorities as expressed in the local sustainable community strategies and LAA where possible. These themes help inspectorates build a framework for coding our evidence that ensures adequate coverage of key local and national priorities.

¹ These will include consideration of the outcomes frameworks for adult social care and children.

- 130** At either the individual or joint stage, follow-up activity by the Audit Commission CAA Lead or the relevant inspectorate or auditor may be needed to verify, or gather additional, evidence from the partnership or organisation. By following up only where our analysis shows it is needed, our approach is inherently proportionate. To ensure we only do what is necessary, we will decide any further work by considering:
- What is the gap in our evidence that we need to fill in order to reach a robust conclusion?
 - Is this evidence available from information held by one of the inspectorates, or in the public domain?
 - Is this evidence available from information held by the partnership or organisation?
 - What is the most efficient means of obtaining it from the local strategic partnership or relevant local body?
- 131** Where sufficient evidence is not available, we will draw attention to this and any likely implications. If a lack of information in partnership or organisation demonstrates concerns about capacity to tackle weaknesses in performance we will say so. In exceptional circumstances, we will undertake triggered inspections to gather the evidence needed to support a robust conclusion, particularly where urgent improvement is needed, where failure to act could lead to harm, or where there is too little evidence of how well local priorities are being tackled. Any such triggered inspection will be carried out by the relevant inspectorates, and coordinated by the Audit Commission to reduce undue demands on the council and its partners. In some cases, additional audit activity may be appropriate.
- 132** Where applicable, we will collect evidence only once but use it for both the area assessment and the organisational assessment, including the audit work that contributes to this.

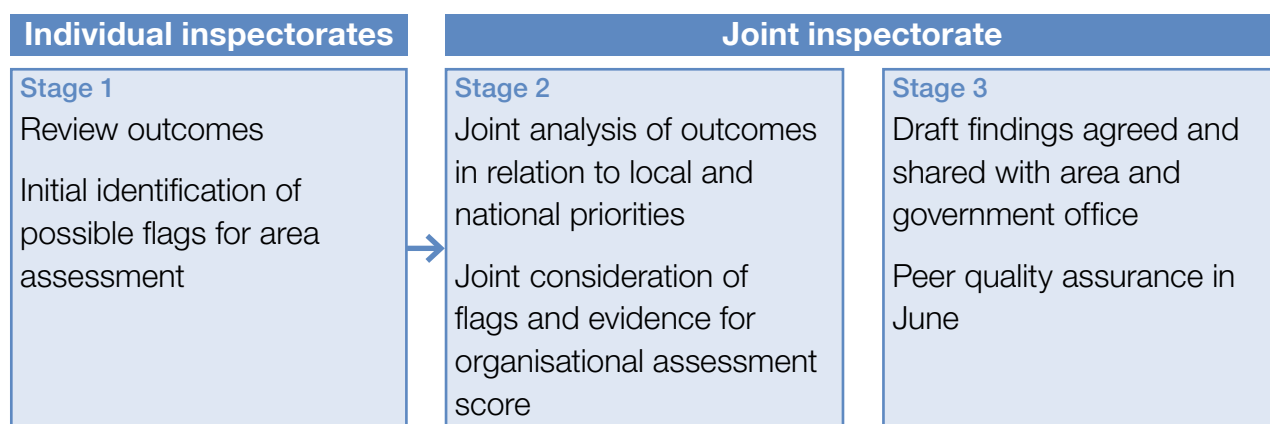
- 133** In January, March and June each year we will update our view of how well local areas and organisations are meeting the needs of local people, whether outcomes are improving and whether priorities are on target to be achieved. We will do this by looking at new or changed evidence of progress towards meeting local and, where applicable, national targets. This joint analysis will make sure that the assessment builds on what we already know, involves the area and organisations regularly, and leads to a rounded view of current performance and likelihood of achieving progress against local priorities.
- 134** We will not publish a written report in January, March or June but will feed back our views to the local partnership as a routine part of our engagement. Where there are concerns, we will raise them at an early stage. In September/October, inspectorates will jointly draft our assessments and share them with the local partners. We will agree and report our findings publicly in November. Through this process, CAA will help drive improvement throughout the year rather than only through annual public reporting. We will share our regular feedback with the government offices in the regions.

135 Figure 3 outlines the cycle of activity that we will follow in carrying out our assessments for CAA. To provide an appropriate balance between engagement and transparency without imposing an unnecessary burden, we will work on a regular cycle and provide updated feedback to the local partners each quarter. We will update our view by focusing on the things that have changed relating to priority issues and ensuring that the work we do is proportionate. Through this process we aim to reach a settled position on particular issues as early as possible to avoid having to deal with all issues in the September quarter, prior to reporting. This is part of our approach to integrating quality assurance and bringing it forward, as a move away from relying on end of process quality control.

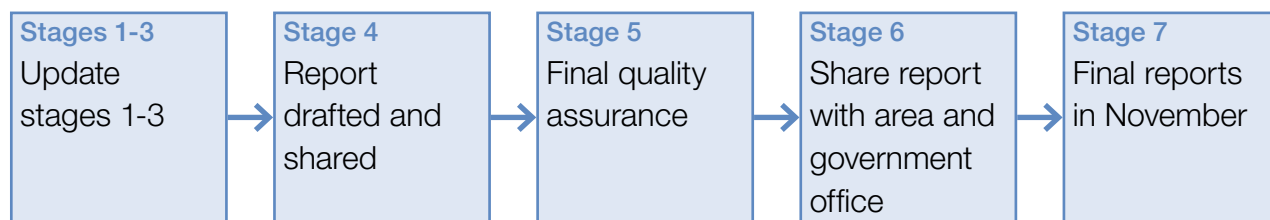
Figure 3

CAA annual cycle

Each January/March/June



September



Involvement of peers and experts by experience

- 136 The broad aim of our overall quality assurance will be to ensure our area assessments and organisational assessments are of a high quality and that we have consistently applied our methodology. We will ensure, for example, that our reports are presented in such a way as to have maximum impact, that red flags are based on sound evidence, and that all judgements are arrived at in line with the agreed process.
- 137 To aid the transparency and credibility of our joint inspectorate quality assurance arrangements we are developing ways to involve experts by experience (that is, people with direct experience of local public services) and peers in these procedures. It is intended that the arrangements we agree will be an ongoing process rather than an end of assessment validation exercise.
- 138 The arrangements will draw on representatives from a range of organisations involved in local strategic partnerships and organisations to which CAA applies as well as people who experience those services. They may include local people, senior officer representatives from councils, housing associations, health or police services as well as representatives of the third and private sectors, or elected councillors. These peers and experts by experience will be independent of the local strategic partnerships or organisations being considered and we will be careful to ensure no conflicts of interest occur.
- 139 We hope that the involvement of these representatives will be valuable as a learning exercise for all involved as well as the inspectorates. Over time it should mean that there is a greater interchange of skills and knowledge across areas, organisations and sectors as well as across the inspectorates. We are keen also to ensure that the approach we take is complementary to any proposals for peer review activity as part of the sectors' own self support arrangements. We will publish our approach to peers in the guidance to inspectorate staff by 31 March 2009.
- 140 Experts by experience and peers are often also used within inspectorates' own quality assurance and evidence collection procedures. These arrangements will continue where appropriate.

How the inspectorates will be organised

- 141 The Audit Commission has aligned its inspectors and auditors to the boundaries of the government offices in the regions. This helps provide rounded judgements about the challenges, performance and prospects for an area. It has also strengthened arrangements for sharing information at national and local levels. It has appointed 41 CAA Leads covering one or more LAA areas to help coordinate local assessments and local teams.
- 142 The Care Quality Commission operational structures will be aligned around the boundaries of the nine government offices in the regions. There will be nine regional directors and 41 area managers who will work alongside the 41 Audit Commission CAA Leads.
- 143 As part of its new organisation, Ofsted will provide a small and specialist team of inspectors who will work with other inspectorates in carrying out CAA. The team will have detailed expertise that reflects Ofsted's broad remit of education, children's services and skills. One inspector will be aligned with each government office region. Beyond this, local councils will be able to have routine contact with an Ofsted inspector linked to their authority who will be able to advise on the pattern of performance and outcomes across all Ofsted's regulation and inspection remits.
- 144 Other inspectorates are contributing in proportion to their own specific role in CAA, and to their own respective size.

Improvement and inspection planning

- 145 We are committed to working with government offices in the regions, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and joint improvement partnerships to ensure that inspection planning is coordinated with wider improvement planning, including any plans for sector-led support in the locality. Strategic health authorities have a significant role in improving health and public health in their area, and liaison with them will also be important. All the key agencies in each area with a role in driving and shaping improvement must liaise to develop a coordinated and coherent approach to improvement planning, including, for example, youth justice boards. All such plans should clearly articulate the respective roles of each of the main contributors to avoid confusion, duplication or unnecessary work and overlap.

Improvement planning

- 146 The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy commits councils and their partners to drive their own improvement towards local priorities. In doing so, the Strategy:
- places regional improvement and efficiency partnerships at the heart of building local delivery support arrangements; and
 - seeks to ensure tailored and coordinated support from the regional improvement and efficiency partnerships working in partnership with the government offices in the regions and the inspectorates.
- 147 Each regional improvement and efficiency partnerships has set out its key ambition for its region identifying core improvement and efficiency objectives to support councils and their partners to achieve the vision for their local area.
- 148 It is important to be clear about the respective roles of the government offices in the regions and the inspectorates. They are set out in more detail in a [Communities and Local Government narrative](#) published in July 2008.
- 149 The roles of government offices and the inspectorates are distinct and complementary. Inspectorates will consider information from government offices in the regions and strategic health authorities about area and organisation performance and improvement. Priorities and progress in an area will not be static and evidence about performance will be shared as regularly as is possible. Inspectorates will share emerging findings of their assessments with the government offices in the regions.

Inspection

- 150 The inspectorates are committed to working in partnership with each other to coordinate inspection and inspection planning. The inspectorates will share proposals for future inspections with local partners responsible for delivery and commissioning, and with the government offices in the regions where it is possible and appropriate to do so. This clearly will not be appropriate for unannounced or short notice inspections.
- 151 A 'gatekeeper' has been identified by central government for each of the main sectors to coordinate inspection and to ensure we manage the administrative impact of inspection on inspected bodies. Together, we will:
- focus our inspectorate capacity where it is needed most;
 - maximise the impact of our inspections by combining resources where possible and appropriate;
 - ensure that organisations and areas do not experience unnecessary or unreasonable levels of inspection; and
 - communicate clearly our combined programme except for short-notice and no-notice inspections.
- 152 Inspection notice periods are reducing to ease the administrative impact on local service providers. So while details of short or no-notice inspections will not be published in advance, all other inspection plans will be, where this is possible.

- 153** Annually, we will consider the administrative impact of inspection across each area and organisation. We will also agree and publish on the CAA website an inspection plan for the coming year indicating the lead inspectorate and when the inspection is due to take place, subject to quarterly updates during the year.
- 154** A main feature of CAA is that inspection activity is more risk-based and tailored to local circumstances so that inspection has greater impact where it is needed most. By April 2009, the costs of public service inspection will have reduced by one-third from the 2003/04 baseline. Inspection will continue to provide independent:
- assurance – for example, on how the place/area as a whole is being served; whether a minimum level of service quality is universally available to a group of people in particularly vulnerable situations; the reliability of self-assessment information; or whether adequate or better outcomes for citizens are likely to be achieved;
 - diagnosis – for example, to enable deeper investigation where there is evidence of weakness or failure, or a high risk of performance slippage or failure. The diagnosis would be tailored to inform improvement support;
 - accountability – for example, to support the public's right to know about the performance of councils and their partners including issues relating to the sound management and protection of public funds; and
 - promotion of improvement – for example, to stimulate action to ensure continuous improvement in service quality and value for money.

Rolling programmes of inspection

- 155 Three-yearly programmes of rolling inspection will continue for only a limited number of services for people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and to minimise the risk of harm to the public by those who offend. The only rolling programmes of inspections that affect councils which have been agreed by government are in relation to safeguarding children and looked after children, and youth offending.
- 156 Ofsted will lead a programme of inspection of safeguarding and looked after children from 1 April 2009 in which the Care Quality Commission will participate. HMI Constabulary is also considering its capacity to contribute to this programme. To make sure the three-yearly inspections are focused, as well as to provide necessary annual assurance around safeguarding, Ofsted will carry out annual inspection of contact, assessment and referral to assess how well those whose circumstances make them vulnerable are supported and safeguarded. The wider programme of safeguarding and looked after children inspection will be carried out in each area once every three years and will draw on evidence from a wide range of other inspection and regulation, including the regulatory inspection of fostering, adoption and children's homes. These inspections will report on how well partners, for example in children's trusts, work together to improve services and outcomes.
- 157 [HMI Probation](#) will lead an inspection visit to every relevant area of England (and Wales) over the next three years and examine a representative sample of case files in order to assess how often certain aspects of youth offending work are being done well enough. This approach has been agreed by the government.
- 158 For those public services provided directly by councils, or jointly in partnership with others, other inspections will be targeted and triggered by single or joint inspectorate concerns arising out of the CAA assessment process at any stage in the year. Inspections will also be informed by the annual joint inspectorate area and organisational assessment reports. In 2009/10, triggered inspection may also follow on from some assessments made under existing performance frameworks reported in late 2008 or early 2009.

Targeted and triggered inspection

- 159** We will consider carrying out a triggered inspection in the following circumstances, balancing urgency and significance of service failure or performance on individuals and groups, and particularly those in most vulnerable circumstances:
- where performance or improvement levels are unsatisfactory, declining or not improving sufficiently quickly;
 - where a service, outcome or one or more service user groups has been identified as being subject to significant risk;
 - where underperformance can best be addressed by inspection, bearing in mind the other means available, such as local improvement activity, peer challenge or review, sector-led improvement support, directive action through the Secretary of State, improvement notices or intervention;
 - where ministers have given directions for an inspection to take place;
 - (in exceptional cases) where performance levels are currently satisfactory but are declining substantially and rapidly; or
 - where there is indication of unsatisfactory performance, for example through a serious case review, but insufficient evidence available to make a robust judgement.
- 160** We will clarify to inspected bodies and the public the purpose of any inspections we undertake.
- 161** We may carry out inspections as single inspectorates or as a partnership of two or more inspectorates, depending on the scope of the inspection. Where the focus of the inspection lies within the scope of an established inspection framework, the relevant framework for inspection will normally apply. Where the focus of the inspection lies outside existing frameworks, the inspectorates will work together and agree the most appropriate methodology to use and share this with the area/organisation to be inspected.
- 162** In CAA, we expect that a greater proportion of our overall inspection activity will be joint inspection activity, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of many LAA targets and the importance of partnership working in improving services and outcomes.

- 163 There will be no set number of triggered inspections as circumstances will vary. However, we do not anticipate the number and size of triggered inspections to be greater than the current level, which has already reduced substantially since 2003/04.
- 164 Triggered inspection may occur at any stage in the year. In practice, we expect most inspections will be scheduled following periodic analysis of CAA evidence, or following the reporting of CAA annual assessments.
- 165 Although an inspection may be triggered at any stage in the year, because of concerns about performance, a red flag in the area or low score in an organisational assessment will lead to consideration of whether triggered inspection is appropriate. In some circumstances, another type of improvement activity may be a more appropriate response. This might involve improvement support from the regional improvement and efficiency partnership or strategic health authority as demonstrated in the [prototype web tool](#).
- 166 In the example of a red flag regarding educational attainment, a series of complementary actions might be put in place including the government office's Children's and Learners' team arranging support for the county council to enable schools and teachers to deliver improved educational standards.

Reporting CAA

What we will report on

- 167** This section explains the reports we expect to publish in November 2009. We will bring together area and organisational assessments, along with each area's performance on the national indicators and links to other assessments in each area (such as schools or care services inspections) on the CAA website. We have included some illustrative examples and developed a [prototype web reporting tool](#).
- 168** Our independent reporting will complement communications people receive from local public service bodies in their area. We will keep our approach to reporting under review and seek feedback on how successful it is. We intend to develop it for subsequent years for example to reflect local neighbourhood or district issues as well as sub-regional and regional matters.

Reporting the area assessment

- 169** Each year we will publish a joint area assessment report for each area covered by an LAA. We will make links to the underlying information and evidence, or provide information on how this can be obtained. We will include our key findings in relation to people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and in relation to inequalities and disadvantage.
- 170** Our reporting will be balanced and provide an overview of significant success, and innovation, as well as identifying clearly any concerns not being addressed, including where there is evidence that important local issues are not reflected in agreed priorities.

171 An initial summary will provide an overview of:

- key priorities identified by the area, including how well they address the needs and aspirations of local people, and progress made in achieving them;
- overall successes and challenges in improving outcomes for local people more widely; and
- the prospects for future improvement in key priorities, including red and green flags.

172 We will not produce an overall score for the area assessment but will report in narrative form our view on how well the key priority issues in the area are being improved. If there are key agreed outcomes that are not on track given the current activities underway or planned by partners we will indicate this by use of a red flag. If there is exceptional performance or outstanding improvement in outcomes from which others could learn we will indicate these by using a green flag. However we expect the majority of the reporting to be in the form of a succinct narrative on what key issues are being tackled, our views on current progress and activities underway and what we or the local partners intend to do next to ensure improvements continue.

- 173 The following examples illustrate the nature and level of the reporting we will produce. These are screenshots, so do not give the full report. For a more comprehensive illustration of our reporting tool, go to our [demonstration web site](#).

Initial overview

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the 'Your local area' application. The address bar shows the URL: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/csademo3/Barshire-Summary.html>. The page has a blue header with the title 'Your local area' and the subtitle 'Assessing the quality of life where you live'. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: Home, Search, News, About CAA, Methodology, National Reports, and Contact us / provide feedback. A breadcrumb trail indicates the user is here: Home > Your Local Area > Barshire In Summary.

On the left side, there is a sidebar with a green background and white text, listing various options for Barshire:

- Barshire
- Quality of life in Barshire - the area assessment in detail
- Improvement activity
- Search by theme
- Best performers for this theme
- How are your local services performing?
- Performance Data
- Compare with similar areas
- Download the full report
- Inspections and performance of other local services
- Contact your local public services
- How to get involved?

At the bottom of the sidebar is a search box labeled 'Search for another area' with a dropdown menu showing 'Barshire' and a 'Find' button.

The main content area is titled 'Barshire, In summary'. It contains a paragraph explaining the assessment's purpose: 'This assessment sets out how your local public services are working together to tackle the major issues facing the people of Barshire. Where we use a red flag this is to highlight where something more or different needs to happen to ensure that the most important challenges in Barshire are delivered. Where we use a green flag, this means that public bodies are achieving exceptional outcomes in priority areas, or something innovative, and that others can learn from.'

Below this paragraph is a table with two columns:

Where different action is needed to deliver desired improvements	Local innovation and excellence in Barshire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing choice in social care Educational attainment Reducing unemployment and worklessness, and improving skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the environment and housing through energy efficient homes

Below the table is a link: [Find out about what's being done in response to these flags](#).

At the bottom of the main content area is a paragraph: 'Over a million people live in the county of Barshire. There are six districts, with big differences in the quality of services provided by their district councils and varying levels of health, wealth and safety. Most people are satisfied with living in Barshire, 73 per cent compared to 64 per cent in similar areas and 62 per cent nationally. Notable skills.'

Green flag example

How environmentally sustainable is Barshire now and for the future?

Address  <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caademo3/CleanGreen.html>  Go  Links

Your local area

Assessing the quality of life where you live



[Home](#) | [Search](#) | [News](#) | [About CAA](#) | [Methodology](#) | [National Reports](#) | [Contact us / provide feedback](#)

You are here: [Home](#) > [Your Local Area](#) > [Barshire in Summary](#) > [Barshire now and for the future](#) > How well do local communities get on in Barshire now and for the future?

Barshire

Quality of life in Barshire - the area assessment in detail

- The local area
- Local priorities
- Healthy and well cared for
- Safe, secure and supported
- Children and young people
- Cleaner and greener**
- Delivering economic prosperity

Improvement activity

Search by theme

Best performers for this theme

How are your local services performing?

Performance Data

Compare with similar areas

Download the full report

Cleaner and greener

Street cleanliness is among the top three things that needed improving in the county, according to local residents. District councils have been successful in improving the cleanliness of the county, levels were formerly amongst the worst and in 2007/08 had reduced the proportion of land with unacceptable levels of litter from 24 per cent the previous year to just less than 10 per cent which is now around the England average. However there is still room for improvement in levels of graffiti visible across the county, particularly in urban areas, where the position slightly worsened in 2007/08. A graffiti strategy and action plan is now in place to tackle this. Barshire in 2007 was a finalist for the Britain in Bloom.



Green – Improving the environment and housing through energy efficient homes

The innovative Warm Homes scheme, in Jeston, is delivering impressive improvements in energy efficiency, health and wellbeing and the quality of the district's housing. By 2011, every home in Jeston will be visited and offered free energy saving products such as loft and cavity wall insulation.

The Warm Homes scheme is the largest scheme in any district in the UK and provides free loft and cavity wall insulation to every household that can benefit from it. The council and local


Red flag example

How good is the well-being of children and young people now and for the future?

Address <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/csademo3/ChildrenYoungPeople.html> Go Links

Your local area

Assessing the quality of life where you live



[Home](#) | [Search](#) | [News](#) | [About CAA](#) | [Methodology](#) | [National Reports](#) | [Contact us / provide feedback](#)

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Barshire

Quality of life in Barshire - the area assessment in detail

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Improvement activity

Search by theme

Best performers for this theme


How are your local services performing?

Performance Data

Compare with similar areas

Download the full report

Giving children and young people the best start in life

 **Red – Educational attainment**

Recent figures show that the proportion of young people in the area achieving a level two qualification (GCSE or equivalent) by the age of 19 is much lower than similar areas, elsewhere, and is getting worse. Outcomes are particularly poor for traveller children and looked after children. Similarly, the figure for school leavers at the age of 16 who are not in employment, education or training in Denshire is much higher than the national figure, and levels of youth offending are high.

Young people and their parents report that a lack of information, affordable accommodation and transport limits access to opportunities. Views of school leavers, and those 16-19 year olds in education and training, suggest that support for continuing in education and training for care leavers is patchy. Support by Barshire County Council for schools and teachers are inadequate to improve educational standards. Current levels of support for schools, teachers and parents are not delivering improvements fast enough, but there are no plans to change this. As a result, the education, and life chances of children and young people in Barshire are not likely to improve in future, and may get worse.

[Find out about what's being done in response to this](#)

Example of minimal reporting where no red or green flags

How well kept is Barshire?



- 174 The area assessment reporting will seek to identify issues that extend beyond the geographical area and those which apply to smaller areas within it. For example, if issues relate to the crime and disorder reduction partnership in a particular district council area, then we will make this clear. This will include links to those for neighbouring areas, where relevant. Reports will contain a context summary showing key issues about the population, the regional and sub-regional context, local arrangements for commissioning and delivering services, as well as a summary of the agreed local priorities.

Reporting the organisational assessment for councils

- 175** Councils have a vital role in leading and shaping their communities. They provide democratically accountable leadership, work with partner organisations locally, and are responsible directly for delivery of many local services.
- 176** Importantly, where an issue is raised in the area assessment (green or red flag) we will make the appropriate links clear within the relevant organisational assessments. This will provide accountability and ensure that efforts at organisational level focus on improving area outcomes.

Organisational assessment examples

Barshire County Council

Address <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caademo3/BarshireCountyCouncil/OrganaAssc.html> Go Links

Your local area
Assessing the quality of life where you live

Home Search News About CAA Methodology National Reports Contact us / provide feedback

You are here: [Home](#) » [Your Local Area](#) » [Barshire in Summary](#) » [Assessments of local public services in Barshire](#) » OA - Barshire County Council

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Search for another area
Barshire Find

Organisation Assessment 2009

Barshire County Council

Overall Barshire County Council performs adequately	
Managing performance 2 out of 4	Value for money 2 out of 4
<p>Barshire County Council performs adequately. The council is providing adequate value for money and manages its performance adequately. The Council is starting to work with local people to understand what is important to them. Some improvements have been made to people's lives in Barshire. Levels of crime and people's fear of crime have reduced. People are also safer on the roads. Public transport is getting better and more people are using it.</p> <p>But there are still some problems in Barshire that the council need to take action to improve. Results for children in Barshire's schools are not improving fast enough and there are high numbers of 18 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training. There are still too many people who are claiming benefits. Too many people do not have jobs, or have low-skill, badly paid jobs. This is because adults in Barshire do not have the skills and qualifications that employers want. The Council is not fixing this quickly enough. It needs to work with businesses and colleges to help local people develop better skills. Older people and people with disabilities are not being supported to live at home. Their</p>	

Jeston District Council

Address <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caademo3/JestonDistrictCouncilOrganisation.html> Go Links

Your local area
Assessing the quality of life where you live

Home Search News About CAA Methodology National Reports Contact us / provide feedback

You are here: [Home](#) > [Your Local Area](#) > [Barshire In Summary](#) > [Assessments of local public services in Barshire](#) > OA - Jeston County Council

Organisation Assessment 2009
Jeston District Council

Overall Jeston District Council performs well

Managing performance 3 out of 4	Value for money 3 out of 4
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Jeston District Council is delivering improvements for local people and is performing well. The council is improving people's lives in Jeston. It is reducing anti-social behaviour by doing joint activities with the police and fire service. Jeston Crime and Disorder reduction partners work well with the county-wide partnership. People are living longer in Jeston. The council and South Barshire Primary Care Trust have worked together to stop people smoking, help them to eat more healthily and do more exercise. The streets are the cleanest in Barshire and people are recycling more. Everyone in Jeston is being offered free insulation for their homes. This is helping people to heat their homes more affordable, and cutting CO₂ emissions. More affordable homes are being developed. People in Jeston have the highest levels of satisfaction of Barshire's six districts and most other district councils in the country.

But there are some problems that the council could tackle better. Levels of waste that each household produces are high. People in Jeston are less confident that people from different backgrounds get on well together than in other parts of Barshire. The council and

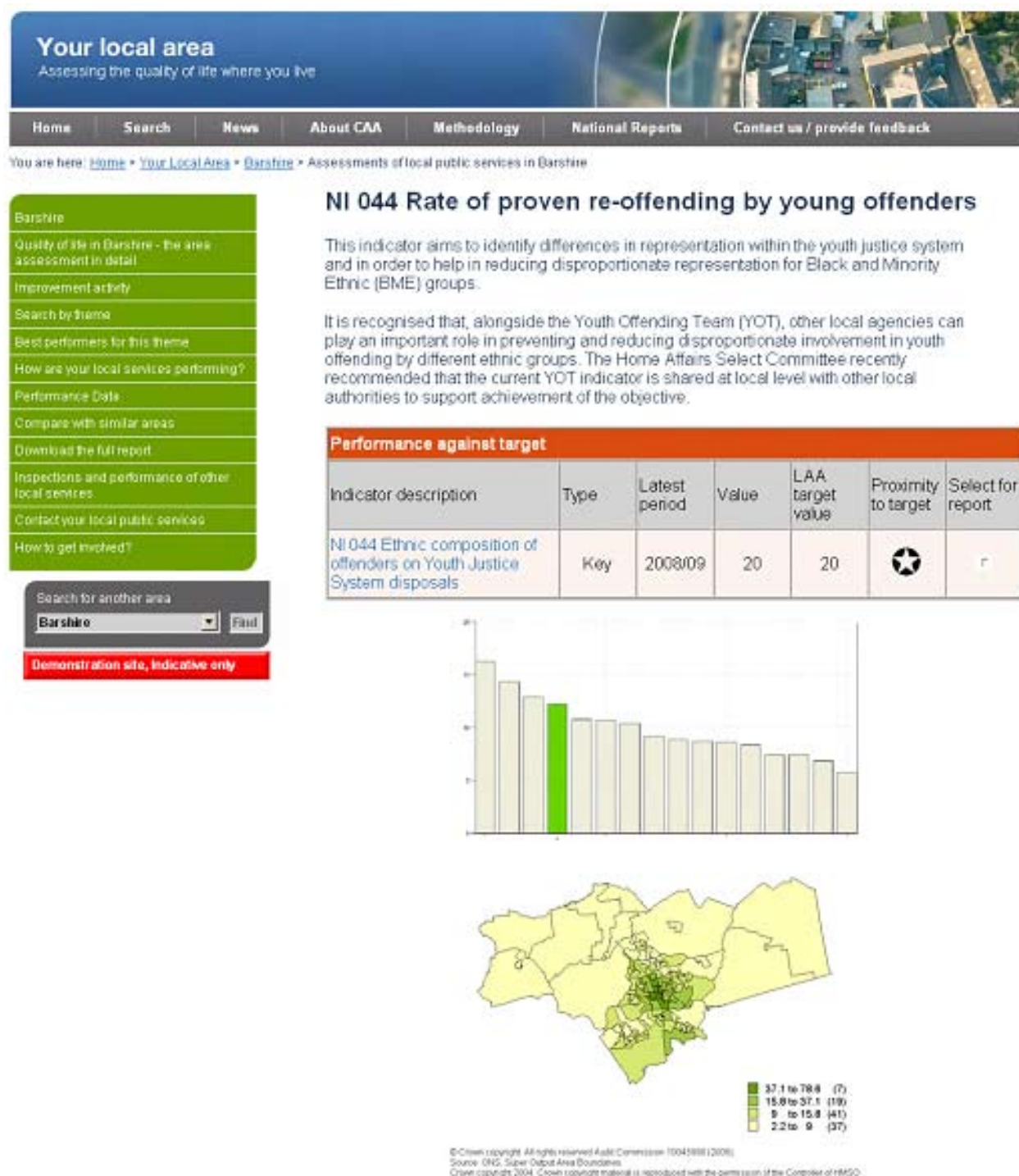
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Search for another area
Barshire Find

Reporting the National Indicator Set

- 177 We will publish performance against each indicator in the National Indicator Set. We will also make clear what evidence and interpretation of data we have used to make our judgements and will provide links to underlying evidence and analysis of the national indicators or, where appropriate, other publicly available data. For assessment and reporting purposes, we will also provide a tool which will enable tailored comparisons of performance to be made by comparing statistical neighbours or those facing similar challenges.

Example of national indicator reporting



- 178 We are keen to ensure that we consider the needs of those who cannot or do not wish to access our reporting via the web. We will design our web reporting so that extracts from the information can be printed and circulated separately in a way that does not require new or additional text or information to be produced. This is especially true of the summary of the CAA reporting for an area to inform the public of our judgements.
- 179 Initially we will design our web reporting so that residents and others can provide feedback on our reporting to indicate whether they found it helpful and how they feel it might be improved.

Timing of reporting

- 180 In the section headed 'How we will carry out CAA', we set out how we will work together to make the CAA assessments. This joint working will not be a once-a-year activity as the evidence for the area and organisational assessments will be gathered and updated throughout the year (with a regular review of key changes – see Paragraph 135 and Figure 3). We will discuss emerging findings with the local partnership, and the individual organisations during the year. In particular, where the evidence indicates serious concerns, we will take all reasonable steps to discuss this with the council and partners in the area immediately and consider what action we might take.
- 181 We will publish our first CAA reports in late November 2009, allowing our findings to be taken into account in reviews of the LAA, and to inform setting priorities and budgets for 2010/11. We will publish area assessment and organisational reports, including the linked graded assessments of children's services and of adult social care simultaneously.

182 The key stages leading up to publishing our area assessment and organisational reports in 2009 are:

- We will review relevant information as it becomes available, including outturn information from April onwards to form our judgements and raise any issues with the local areas. Similarly, any self-evaluation undertaken by the area partners will be taken into account when available. This will help ensure that our evidence and views are up to date so that we can deliver the following, by:
 - early September: Joint-inspectorate review of latest available information including the summer educational attainment data. This will be the general cut off for evidence to generate first final set of reporting; this will not preclude significant new information in a local area being taken into account;
 - September: Joint-inspectorate draft final reporting, including red and green flags and organisational assessment scores and reporting against the 189 national indicators; and discuss key issues arising with local partners. Joint-inspectorate final quality assurance;
 - October: Final reporting shared with local partners. Period to challenge if there is significant disagreement about the area assessment red flag or organisational assessment scored judgements;
 - early November: Resolve any remaining challenges through formal process; and
 - late November 2009: Publish first set of CAA reports.

183 Cut-off dates for the supply of evidence will apply so that we can report in a timely way. But we intend to use the most up-to-date information wherever possible to ensure our reports are credible and relevant to local people.

184 Once we have published our reports, we would not expect to amend them until the following annual reporting round. This means that flags would remain in the report. However, we will keep them under review during the year and would keep the local strategic partnership informed through our regular dialogue about whether they remain relevant.

An evolving assessment

- 185** The area assessment will evolve and mature to tell a story of the place over time. We do not expect to cover the whole story in the first year, but will focus on the highest priorities. In the first year of CAA we will set a baseline using available evidence. We will take account also of relevant aspects of recent assessments, such as comprehensive performance assessment of councils, joint area reviews and annual performance assessments of children's services, star ratings of adult social care services, and annual health checks of NHS organisations and assessments of police authorities and forces.
- 186** Organisational assessments will also evolve over time as circumstances, including structural changes in both local service bodies and in inspectorates, take place and mature.
- 187** In future years, we will look at other areas and at what has changed, building up a fuller picture. We will assess the impact of action taken to improve performance and outcomes, updating earlier assessments and taking account of longer-term evidence and trends as they become available.
- 188** Our reporting each year will be affected by a number of factors. The availability of reliable evidence and a change in trends, as the National Indicator Set becomes more established, the transition from current assessment frameworks and the changes to inspectorates also shape what can be done in 2009. We will ensure an effective transition.
- 189** Improvement in some areas, such as economic regeneration, improvement in life expectancy or climate change, requires long-term attention. Similarly, CAA will evolve not only to reflect changes in available evidence, it will also adapt to broader changes. Public services need to improve continuously to meet ever-rising expectations and changing needs of communities. CAA will take account of this and we expect that, by being flexible and evolving over time, we can avoid the need for major changes in the overall approach and performance framework for the foreseeable future.

Reviewing and evaluating CAA

- 190** We will commission an external evaluation of the CAA programme to assess its impact and value for money. The evaluation will consider three primary areas of interest:
- the CAA process;
 - the impact of CAA in changing the way that local public bodies manage themselves and perform their functions; and
 - the eventual impact on the quality of public services and the associated outcomes.
- 191** The evaluation of the CAA process will include the practical arrangements for CAA, the immediate response of those subject to assessment and the size of the inspection and assessment burden carried both by inspectorates and local public bodies. This section will be used to inform the development of the CAA methodology and the interactions with local public bodies.
- 192** The second area of the evaluation will look at the direct response to CAA by local public bodies. It will look, for example, at how local public bodies respond to flags in reports and the ability of CAA to support partnership working in areas.
- 193** The final area of interest will look at the role of CAA in improving public services. It will specifically cover issues of protection for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, the delivery of value for money within an area and the overall quality of public services.
- 194** The evaluation process will be steered by a cross-inspectorate project board. An external reference group will be used to ensure that the evaluation both meets the needs of stakeholders and has validity. Membership of this group will include representatives of local public bodies, practitioners and central government. There will also be an external expert advisory group to provide advice on methodology. This group will include experts from the inspectorates, academics and others including inspectorate board members and Audit Commission commissioners.
- 195** We are already starting to prepare the ground for evaluation. This includes developing a framework for assessing the administrative burden which will, ideally, be agreed with representatives of local public bodies. Some assessment of the baseline for this burden will be measured. Early in 2009, procurement for the main evaluation will start.

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