



News release
29 July 2008

WATCHDOGS LAUNCH SECOND STAGE OF CAA CONSULTATION

Today, 29 July 2008, sees the launch of the second joint consultation document setting out a proposed approach to the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

CAA is to be introduced in April 2009, with first reports published in November 2009, and will be an innovative way of drawing together information to show how well residents are being served by their local public services. It will give people a clear and impartial assessment of how successfully local organisations are working together to improve the quality of life in their areas.

CAA information will help people to hold their elected representatives and public bodies to account, and make the most of their opportunities to influence local decisions. CAA will focus on the things that affect people's lives and where they live, looking at local concerns and priorities. The process will cover a wide range of issues including the strength of the local economy, availability of affordable housing, children's wellbeing, how safe people feel, support for individuals to improve their health, provision for the vulnerable, and the quality of the local environment. It will build on the work of seven inspectorates to put all this valuable information in the hands of taxpayers, service users and citizens.

The issues that CAA will reflect impact on everyone's life, but are not the preserve of any one public body, or of the state alone. For the first time, CAA brings together the work of seven inspectorates: the Audit Commission, the Commission for Social Care Inspection, the Healthcare Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspector of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted. Working together, they will coordinate their inspection and regulation of local services, cutting the administrative impact on local organisations and reducing duplication.

The inspectorates have listened to the feedback from the first joint consultation on CAA, and this has formed the basis for the second. Key changes are the simplification of the main elements into just two, Area Assessments and Organisational Assessments, and the use of the National Indicator Set of 198 core performance indicators.

The central questions that the inspectorates are consulting on follow, or can be accessed via <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp>

The consultation period will run from 29 July to 20 October 2008. The proposals are being trialled at ten sites across the country to test them in 'real life' situations. The arrangements for CAA will then be finalised early in 2009.

(ENDS)

QUESTIONS FOLLOW

The main questions that we would like views on in order to help us refine the final CAA methodology are set out below:

1. Do you broadly agree with our proposals for the overall CAA framework?
2. Are the area assessment and the organisational assessment, as the two key elements of the framework, clearly explained?
3. Is the link between these two assessments clear?
4. Do you agree that the three headings and supporting issues (see appendix1) proposed for the area assessment are the right ones? If not, please suggest an alternative questions and/or issues.
5. Do you agree that we should use the green and red flag approach for reporting the area assessment? If not, please suggest an alternative approach.
6. Do you agree that we should have one overall organisational effectiveness judgement, drawn from integrating the managing performance theme and the use of resources themes?
7. Do you agree with our proposals for the key questions and focus for the managing performance theme of the organisational assessment for (a) councils and (b) fire services? If not, please suggest alternative questions and/or focus.
8. Which of the three options for scoring the organisational assessment should we adopt? If you disagree with all the options, please propose an alternative approach to scoring.
9. Do the proposals provide for an appropriate focus to be given to people in vulnerable circumstances?
10. Do you agree that CAA should evolve over time?
11. Do you broadly agree with the way we are proposing to use the National Indicator Set within the CAA framework?
12. Do you support our proposals to report the assessments as set out in our prototype CAA reporting tool? If not, please suggest alternative proposals for reporting.

13. Do you agree with our proposals for peer involvement? If you have suggestions about this please outline your ideas.

14. Do you agree with our approach to self-evaluation?

15. Do you agree with our approach to gather relevant information from sources such as Citizens Advice Bureaux and Regional Business Forums? Are there any other sources we should consider?

We are inviting comments on these proposals and will finalise the assessment framework by early 2009. Please respond using the online form at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp or by post to Audit Commission, Local Government Directorate, Hub 4, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, London SW1P 4HQ. The closing date for responses is 5.00pm on Monday 20 October 2008.

More information

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