Comprehensive Area Assessment
Guidance for inspectorate staff

Effective from 01 April 2009
Version control

We will make minor amendments, corrections and add clarifications during the year to this guidance to ensure it is up-to-date and relevant to your needs. If you print a copy, please check the online version regularly to ensure your version is still up-to-date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Version number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 April 2009</td>
<td>v1-0</td>
<td>First issue of guidance document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>V1-1</td>
<td>Repair of broken web links, corrections of spelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12.1 Evidence ...........................................................................................................109
12.2 Other performance frameworks .....................................................................115
12.3 Self-assessment ............................................................................................119
12.4 Freedom of information and CAA .................................................................119

Section 13: Quality Assurance ........................................................................120
13.1 Overall approach ..........................................................................................120
13.2 Independent expert involvement in quality assurance .................................121
13.3 National overview arrangements ................................................................122
13.4 Expert advisory panels ..............................................................................123
13.5 Reviews of red flags and scored judgements ................................................124
13.6 Complaints ..................................................................................................124
13.7 Lawful judgements and decisions ................................................................124

Section 14: Learning from your work ................................................................126

Section 15: Improvement planning and inspection ............................................128
15.1 Improvement planning ................................................................................128
15.2 Government offices in the regions, inspectorates and regional improvement and efficiency partnerships ......................................................129
15.3 Joint inspection planning ............................................................................131
15.4 Links to audit planning ................................................................................136

Appendix 1 - Ten Themes ..................................................................................138
How safe is the area? ..........................................................................................139
How healthy and well supported are people? ...................................................141
How well is adult social care meeting people’s needs and choices? ...............144
How well kept is the area? .................................................................................147
How environmentally sustainable is the area? ................................................149
How strong is the local economy? ......................................................................152
How strong and cohesive are local communities? ..........................................155
How well is housing need met? ..........................................................................157
How well are families supported? .....................................................................161
How good is the well-being of children and young people? .........................163
How good is the well-being of older people? ....................................................166

Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities of the CAA inspectorates .................168
Section 1: Recent and future updates

V1-1 – With the formation of the Care Quality Commission and the relaunch of the Audit Commission website the opportunity has been taken to update any broken web links and correct spelling mistakes that occurred in V1-0.

V1-0 - The first version of the CAA guidance is dated 1 April 2009.

We will make minor amendments, corrections and add clarifications during the year to ensure that the guidance is up-to-date and relevant to your needs. We will use learning from year 1 to develop a full update to the guidance for year 2.

We will add a section on freedom of information in coming months. It will include guidance about document retention.

We will also update section 13.5 on the joint inspectorate review process. We will consult on this in April 2009 and update the guidance in July 2009.
Section 2: About the guidance

This guidance is for all staff carrying out the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) from April 2009.

In the guidance, ‘we’ and ‘us’ refers to the six inspectorates which are working together to deliver CAA from April 2009: the Audit Commission, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation), and Ofsted.

By ‘you’ we mean the inspectorate staff responsible for making CAA judgements, unless we clearly say otherwise in specific sections.

We are publishing the guidance in an online format. This will enable us to update it easily when we need to, to take account of changing circumstances and relevant feedback and learning. New guidance and changes will be highlighted in ‘Section 1: Recent and future updates’. We will alert inspectorate staff to any changes using internal communications. If you are using a printed version of the guidance, be sure to check for the latest updates.

It is essential that you read in full the CAA framework document published on 10 February 2009 because we have not repeated its contents in this guidance. You should also be familiar with:

- the prototype CAA reporting website;
- the framework for children and young people;
- the framework for adult social care; and
- the Equalities Impact Assessment for CAA

By making our guidance available publicly we aim to support a mature assessment framework through promoting open and transparent discussions among assessors and the bodies we assess.

2.1 Purpose of the guidance

This initial guidance focuses on how you will carry out CAA in year 1 and what you will be doing from April to November 2009. It is one of many tools which we will produce to support you as you implement CAA. We will also provide training, communication bulletins, briefings and technical updates as required.
We need consistency in our approach to CAA to ensure we report credible judgements everywhere on time, and to effectively manage our resources and priorities. However, we also need to be flexible enough to enable you to fit your arrangements around local ways of working and events. We have reflected the need for both consistency and flexibility in the guidance.

The guidance supports the Comprehensive Area Assessment framework published in February 2009. It complements other guidance produced separately by CAA inspectorates including:

- Audit Commission use of resources guidance published in October 2008;
- The Care Quality Commission performance assessment guidance published on 10 February 2009;
- Ofsted outline of arrangements for contributing to CAA published on 10 February 2009;
- Ofsted frameworks and guidance for inspecting safeguarding and looked after children which will be published shortly; and
- Ofsted’s arrangements for the annual rating of performance of council children’s services which will also be published shortly.

## 2.2 Explanation of the contents

Section 1: Recent and future updates – in this section we highlight the most recent changes and additions to the guidance and provide a link to the relevant section that has been updated. We also list any forthcoming guidance, where we can.

Section 2: About the guidance – in this section we explain the purpose, contents and how to use the guidance.

Section 3: Key messages for 2009 – in this section we remind you about what CAA is all about, and outline how the current economic downturn will shape how we implement CAA in 2009.

Section 4: Underpinning themes – in this section we describe the themes that underpin all our assessments in CAA. This includes sustainability, inequality, people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and value for money.

Section 5: How we will carry out CAA – in this section we outline the key steps and timetable for CAA in 2009.

Section 6: Working together – in this section we explain how we will work together as inspectorates, how we will work with others to assess outcomes in an area, and how we will work with the organisations we will be assessing.

Section 7: Assessment links – in this section we provide guidance about the links across the assessments.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Section 8: Area assessment – in this section we set out how we will address the three key area assessment questions.

Section 9: Council organisational assessment and council managing performance guidance – in this section we provide guidance on the managing performance theme of the organisational assessments for councils.

Section 10: Fire and rescue authority organisational assessment and fire and rescue authority managing performance guidance – in this section we provide guidance on the managing performance theme of the organisational assessments for fire and rescue authorities.

Section 11: Regular reporting and annual reports – in this section we explain our approach to feeding back our emerging findings to local strategic partnerships, other local stakeholders and organisations, and how we will report to the public and others. We also outline how we will report the National Indicator Set.

Section 12: Evidence – in this section we explain what we mean by evidence, the type of evidence we might expect to use and how we might interpret it. This section also explains how we will incorporate judgements from other performance frameworks.

Section 13: Quality assurance – in this section we explain the arrangements we will adopt to ensure robust and credible assessments.

Section 14: Learning from your work – in this section we explain the importance of sharing learning.

Section 15: Improvement planning and inspection planning – in this section we explain how we will use our CAA findings to inform our joint inspection planning in the context of wider improvement planning.

Appendix 1: Area assessment: ten themes.

Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities of the CAA inspectorates.

2.3 How to use and print the guidance

We have presented this guidance online to provide easy access. You should familiarise yourself with the content of all the sections. You should use the guidance in a way appropriate to the particular circumstances of the area or organisation you are assessing.

For some topics we have listed additional documents where you can find more information.
This version of the guidance is designed to be printed. The online version will be the most up-to-date and has links to other relevant information. Always check you are using the most recent version.

## 2.4 Navigation and search tips

When you use the online version of the guidance you can move through the document using the contents or search tabs in the top left of the screen.

The contents tab will display the sections in the guidance. You can click on the section heading to display the next level of headings. This enables you to go straight to the chosen section.

The search tab allows you to search the document using specific words. If you enter more than one word in the search box, the search will pull up all the sections which contain each of the words, whether or not they appear side by side. It is not possible to search on a phrase by using quotation marks.
Section 3: Key messages for 2009

CAA is an annual assessment that will take account of the current context.

3.1 Reminder: what is CAA about?

As you undertake your assessments for the first time, remember that CAA is about:

- people, especially people whose circumstances make them vulnerable;
- places;
- partnership working;
- outcomes;
- future prospects;
- an increased focus on local priorities;
- a risk-based, proportionate, no surprises, approach; and
- coordinated and coherent improvement planning.

You should focus your assessments and reports on the issues which matter most to local people.

3.2 Public services and the recession

What’s this about?

The recession is already having a significant impact on individuals and across public, private and third sectors. The effects will be felt everywhere, and the impacts will be different depending on local circumstances. The impact may also vary between different communities and population groups, some people whose circumstances make them vulnerable may be disproportionately affected. The economic picture will almost certainly change between now and November. You will need to reflect the most up-to-date situation in your CAA reports.

Why is it important?

When you are assessing the outcomes and future prospects for an area in 2009 you will need to consider the impact of the current economic conditions. You should, for example, consider the direct impact that the downturn is having on public sector finances, on demand for services and skills, and on improvement targets for particular outcomes. You will also need to take account of the action being taken locally to mitigate the effects and prepare for successful recovery when conditions improve.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

The impacts are not all negative, and the outlook is not only bleak. While the recession poses very significant problems for local people and for the local public sector it also provides opportunities for them to adapt and for organisations to restructure and develop a more sustainable economy, reduce the environmental footprint of the local economy, and develop and access a more skilled labour market. The Treasury’s 2006 Stern Review Report emphasises this point.

Evidence of innovative solutions to protect people, homes and businesses are already emerging.

The examples below show just a few possible effects which may be experienced. All of these are interconnected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local people</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples of short term impacts:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Examples of long term impacts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• unemployment;</td>
<td>• unable to access a recovering economy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mortgage and financial difficulties;</td>
<td>• loss of ambition;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• family breakdown; and</td>
<td>• dependency culture;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more reliance on state benefits and services.</td>
<td>• negative equity;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• housing shortages; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• mental health problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authorities and other public sector bodies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples of short term impacts:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Examples of long term impacts:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• increased demand for services due to, for example, a rise in the number of benefit claimants and increases in homelessness;</td>
<td>• pressure on finances;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reduced income from fees, charges and investments;</td>
<td>• reduced public satisfaction;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• regeneration projects stalled as investment funds dry up;</td>
<td>• more need for regeneration;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Private Finance Initiative deals stalled;</td>
<td>• loss of key skills and staff;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• redundancies and service cuts; and</td>
<td>• increased anti-social behaviour; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• increased demand for state school places for children who were previously at private schools.</td>
<td>• public health problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Local third sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of short term impacts:</th>
<th>Examples of long term impacts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• increased demand for services associated with the short term effects of worklessness, such as debt advice; and • reduced donations and grants.</td>
<td>• increased demand for services associated with the long term effects of worklessness, such as mental health or family breakdown; • need to create additional capacity; and • long term financial viability problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Local business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of short term impacts:</th>
<th>Examples of long term impacts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• lower demand; • cashflow difficulties; • access to credit limited; • less investment; and • business failures.</td>
<td>• reduced competitiveness; • skills shortages; and • weak ongoing economy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What might you look for?

As you address the area assessment questions, you should seek to understand, for example:

- the nature of the local economy, and the impact of the recession on people and public sector organisations in each area;

- the expected future impact of the recession during 2009 and beyond, including any expectations and forecasts about local businesses, employment, and housing;

- how the recession could impact on specific localities, communities and groups;

- whether the recession is impacting particularly badly on people in vulnerable circumstances;

- any changes local partners are making to their improvement targets, priorities and plans, to take account of the recession; and

- how effectively local partners are identifying and addressing the key risks and opportunities.
Section 4: Underpinning themes

This section introduces the four underpinning themes that thread throughout the approach to CAA. You will need to use these to underpin your assessment.

4.1 Sustainability

What’s this about?

The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without irretrievably damaging the environment that we and future generations depend on for resources and life support systems, such as clean air and water.

For CAA, you will use the sustainable development principles contained in the UK sustainable development strategy, 2005, *Securing the future*. This sets out that sustainable development needs to be pursued in an integrated way through:

- a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment; and
- a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being.

This needs to be done in a way that protects and enhances the physical and natural environment and uses resources and energy as efficiently as possible.

This is shown in the diagram below:
Why is it important?

A good quality of life for all citizens cannot be at the expense of the quality of life of succeeding generations. Key to achieving this are an economy that is resilient to inevitable economic cycles and not dependent on finite resources like oil, and taking decisions that are based on scientific evidence and arrived at through good inclusive governance. Achieving sustainable development is as much about achieving a sustainable economy and ensuring social and economic inclusion as it is about protecting the environment.

Climate change is the most graphic and pressing example of what happens when we breach environmental limits and do not control greenhouse gas emissions. Current economic development patterns cause pollution, habitat and biodiversity losses, water shortages, and growing levels of waste. There are also risks of unsustainable communities, inequalities, a lack of cohesion, and inadequate governance and services.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

There may be a temptation in the current economic climate to suggest we should wait until things improve before addressing issues of sustainable development. But the recession, which was in part the result of an unsustainable economy, offers the opportunity to restructure the economy to make it more sustainable. The Treasury’s 2006 Stern Review Report on the economics of climate change emphasises this point. The point is taken further in the February 2009 Grantham Research Institute outline of the case for a ‘green’ stimulus.

What might you look for?

Delivering sustainable development involves planning for the long-term, delivering economic, social and environmental principles in harmony, integrating them in decision-making and considering impacts beyond the local area.

You will be looking to see if local partners:

- understand the connections between their economy, the people that live there and their environmental footprint; and

- are implementing what it they have to, to make their area more sustainable.

You might also look for:

- a local economy that is accessible to local people, resource efficient, low carbon, has sustainable transport options for the movement of people and goods, and is hence sustainable in the long-term;

- housing that is energy and water efficient, and at the same time is affordable and close or well-connected to local services by public transport;

- mechanisms that are reducing the carbon emissions of all public sector operations

- communities that are helped to make healthy lifestyle choices around food, travel and leisure; and

- communities that are helped to provide support to people whose circumstances make them vulnerable, such as adults with social care needs. The support needs to be provided in ways that are sustainable, for example, taking account of an ageing population.
Reference material and further information

View the UK government sustainable development strategy [Securing the future](#).

*Local decision making and sustainable development* sets out the key responsibilities of local authorities and their LSP partners in relation to sustainable development.

View the [Sustainable Development Commission](#) website which is the Government's independent advisory body on sustainable development.

### 4.2 Tackling inequality, disadvantage and discrimination

**What's this about?**

We consider equality, diversity and human rights in area and organisational assessment because we recognise there are many people who face potential barriers in trying to access public services and influence decision making about public services. These barriers can be because of prejudice and discrimination or because services are not designed to be accessible for all local people. This means that currently many people do not experience fair access to services or a fair quality of life, or the opportunity to realise their full potential.

**Why is it important?**

As public authorities, the inspectorates have legal duties and responsibilities about race, gender disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. The details of these public duties are on the [equality and human rights website](#).

Each of the inspectorates has a strong commitment to diversity, equality, human rights and focusing on service users. This commitment is based on legal obligations to promote equality of opportunity, good relations and positive attitudes; and eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment. But more importantly, it is fundamental to creating an inclusive local environment and stronger communities. The joint inspectorates are committed to ensuring that CAA promotes equality of opportunity and positive attitudes to, and good relations between, different groups.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

What might you look for?

To ensure the joint inspectorates are meeting these objectives and our duties in CAA we have carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment of our framework.

The agreed approach to assessing equality and diversity in CAA is to consider evidence of how well public services are meeting the needs of the diverse groups within communities. This will focus on whether groups and individuals who can experience discrimination and disadvantage receive equitable outcomes from their local public services and the extent to which different service users can influence decision-making. You will assess whether local services address citizens’ human rights. Your assessments will recognise the different nature of diversity in different places.

By diverse groups we mean those protected by equality legislation:

- disabled people;
- black and minority ethnic groups;
- older and younger people;
- gay, lesbian and bi-sexual people;
- people of transgender;
- women and men; and
- people who hold religious or other belief systems.

We also include those whose circumstances make them vulnerable (see 4.3 below). In some circumstances individuals may experience multiple disadvantage and discrimination.

If you find that outcomes delivered are less equitable for some groups and individuals in areas and local partners do not have robust plans in place to address this, you should identify this in your assessment and highlight the need for further action to investigate and address the causes. If you find that local partners have not identified, or have little or no information about, service needs or outcomes for diverse groups within their area you should conclude that the local partners have not placed sufficient focus and action on improving services to meet the needs of these groups and individuals.

Evidence of poorer outcomes or local services not meeting citizen’s human rights may be addressed through targeted inspections and through consideration of the systems that local public services have in place to ensure:

- fair access to service and information about services;
- that people are treated with dignity and respect; and
- that service users have the right to see and to challenge decisions made about the services that affect them individually.
You should consider the key issues raised by citizens with the local advice and support agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux and complaints made about public services.

**Reference material and further information**

The [Equalities and Human Rights Commission](http://www.equalities.gov.uk) works to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and to build good community relations. This website contains a wide range of information about equality and diversity including information about the legal equality duties for public bodies and wider equalities legislation.

The [Equalities and Cohesion Team](http://www.idea.org.uk) at the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) provides up-to-date information for local councils on equality policy and practice, such as where to find evidence and data, guidance on legislation and examples of good practice. The New Equalities Framework (which replaces the Equalities Standard) is designed to help local councils to improve their performance in understanding and meeting the needs of the diverse communities which they serve.

The [British Institute on Human Rights](http://www.humanrights.org.uk) provides a range of information on human rights issues including plain English guides on human rights for people with mental health problems, disabled people, older people and refugees and asylum seekers.

### 4.3 People whose circumstances make them vulnerable

**What’s this about?**

Inspectorates have specific responsibilities towards children and adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable, as well as in relation to people (such as offenders, those who misuse substances or those with certain mental health needs) who may make others vulnerable. This is reinforced by the government’s public service agreement for socially excluded adults (PSA16) which focuses on employment and accommodation services for care leavers, ex-offenders, adults with moderate to severe learning difficulties and adults with severe mental health conditions.
People become vulnerable because of their particular circumstances through a combination of:

- their needs and how dependent on public services they are to address that need (for example related to illness, the need for care or support, homeless);
- how at risk they are of harm; and
- how marginalised in society they are.

Examples of circumstances which may make people vulnerable include:

- people who are or at risk of being homeless or sleeping rough;
- people living in poverty;
- people in need of care and support services;
- children, young people and adults at risk of harm;
- people with alcohol or drug problems;
- young carers;
- young people in care;
- young people leaving care;
- teenage parents;
- people with learning difficulties or disabilities;
- people with enduring health problems;
- people with mental health support needs;
- homeless families with support needs;
- ex-offenders and offenders under probation supervision;
- people at risk of abuse; and
- transient people (including Gypsies and Travellers) living on unauthorised sites.

**Why is it important?**

Some individuals and groups have a greater reliance on public services because of their personal circumstances. These circumstances may also mean that people find it harder to access key needs such as employment, training and settled accommodation, which increases their vulnerability. They may also experience multiple disadvantage and discrimination, making them vulnerable to harm or poorer quality of life when public services do not respond to their needs suitably. The inspectorates therefore have particular responsibilities to assess how well local public services are meeting the needs of people whose circumstances make them vulnerable. You should pay particular attention to people whose circumstances present a risk to them and highlight any concerns clearly, allowing for the different levels of risk and urgency associated with such circumstances.
What might you look for?

You will need to adapt your assessment scope to fit each area. In each place you should identify any particular circumstances which might cause people to be at risk of harm or disadvantage. Where there is a significant service failure in supporting children or adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable, or poor performance in terms of outcomes, that is not being adequately addressed you should make this clear in your public report. You may identify this through the National Indicator Set or other evidence, such as findings of school or care provision inspection and regulation. Where appropriate you should also link this to your organisational assessment judgements of the organisations that are accountable for the issue.

Reference material and further information

The Communities and Local Government website about Supporting People provides a range of information and useful links about supporting vulnerable people to live independently.

View details of the government’s public service agreement for socially excluded adults (PSA 16) on the Cabinet Office micro site on social exclusion.

Valuing people now is the government’s strategy for the next three years for people with learning disabilities. It also responds to the main recommendations in Healthcare for all, the independent inquiry into access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities.

4.4 Value for money

What’s this about?

Value for money is about getting the maximum benefit over time with the resources available. It is about achieving the right balance among economy, efficiency and effectiveness (the ‘3Es’), spending less and spending wisely to achieve priorities for local people.

Over the years, value for money (particularly in relation to effectiveness) has evolved to embrace expectations that are placed on public services. For example, the use of resources framework for 2008/09 assesses how aspects of delivering in partnership, equalities and sustainable development underpin considerations of the quality and effectiveness of public services. As sustainable development has risen up the agenda there is recognition that efficiency and sustainability need to be balanced within robust decision making so that outcomes are effective over time.
While the use of resources judgements apply to individual organisations the principles apply just as much to delivering value for money when working in partnership.

The Audit Commission’s use of resources assessment, which forms part of the organisational assessments, considers how well individual public bodies manage and use their resources to deliver value for money and better and sustainable outcomes for local people. The assessment is structured into three themes that focus on the importance of sound and strategic financial management, strategic commissioning and good governance, and the effective management of natural resources, assets and people. These themes remain relevant when looking at value for money across an area.

Public services are increasingly expected to work together to deliver better value for the public purse in each area. This expectation moves away from a solely organisationally based assessment towards understanding how decisions made in one service can affect the value for money in related services. The challenges of the current recession make it even more important that there is successful partnership working to make effective use of public money, and, that available resources are deployed as efficiently as possible to pursue local priorities. This means considering how well partnerships and organisations are identifying and adapting their service delivery to the challenges that local communities face, including those stemming from the recession.

The diagram below provides an example of how decisions in one service affect another. It shows how both financial security and the extent to which housing need is being met can have a positive impact on peoples’ mental and physical health. This can then lead to reduced spending elsewhere in public services.
Intervention early on in a delivery chain can reduce the need for more intensive or costly services across a range of providers. Effective early intervention can reduce the need for more intensive and/or costly services across a range of providers in the longer term. A further good example is the recognition that learning basic skills at an early age enables children to achieve well later, allowing for greater career choice and improved economic well-being.

Why is it important?

In a climate of economic change, lower increases in grant settlements than in previous spending reviews may be coupled with potentially higher demand. Thus it is important that all partners in an area work together to ensure resources are delivering value for money. Delivering improved outcomes for local people can involve a complex network of organisations, including those from central and local government, the public, private and third sectors. Within this, there are likely to be opportunities to deliver better value for money for the public purse. All organisations need to work together to improve public sector outcomes.
What might you look for?

Organisations and partnerships can show they are achieving value for money by balancing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in different ways that reflect local circumstances as well as national priorities. You will need to adapt your assessment to reflect local circumstances, but the things you might look for are:

- the extent to which there are shared objectives and whether the principles of value for money are applied to shared resources;
- whether partners in an area have a clear and common understanding of the mainstream public sector spending under their influence;
- whether local partners understand delivery chains for outcomes and align resources and overcome barriers;
- whether partners recognise the extent to which spending in one sector could bring better value for money in another and lead to more effective overall resource use;
- how well partners measure and manage efficiencies and exploit the potential efficiency gains from working together; and
- how well partners understand the resources available to them and the extent to which they influence spending decisions, including to shift mainstream resources to deliver improved outcomes.

Reference material and further information

View the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy which sets out how central and local government will provide the support that local partnerships will need to deliver excellent local area agreements.

View the Audit Commission’s use of resources guidance which provides the methodology for the assessment of the value for money in use of resources in councils, police, fire and rescue authorities and primary care trusts.

View the National Audit Office and Audit Commission report on Delivering Efficiently - Strengthening the links in public service delivery chains. The report looked at the effectiveness and efficiency of arrangements to improve local public services.

View the research report Evidence of savings, improved outcomes and good practice attributed to Local Area Agreements. This research carried out on behalf of ODPM (now Communities and Local Government) by the LGA provides evidence of savings, improved outcomes and good practice that could be attributed to local area agreements at the end of the pilot local area agreements first year of operation. The report also highlights some areas for improvement.
Section 5: How we will carry out CAA in year 1

5.1 The analytical framework

You will work on the area assessments and the organisational assessments throughout the year. Regular dialogue between inspectorate and audit colleagues, as needed, will ensure you can keep each other up-to-date with significant developments which may impact on your respective assessments and evidence reviews. The CAA Lead will also co-ordinate regular dialogue with local partners to integrate a 'no surprises approach' and to enable you to jointly respond quickly and effectively as issues arise.

See sections 6.1 and 6.2 for further information on working together and with local partners and partnerships.

As well as liaising regularly you will need to contribute to events which form part of the annual CAA cycle.

The diagram below outlines the CAA cycle.

---

**CAA Annual Cycle**

*Each January/March/June*

- **Individual inspectorates**
  - **Stage 1**
    - Review outcomes
    - Initial identification of possible flags for area assessment
  - **Stage 2**
    - Joint analysis of outcomes in relation to local and national priorities.
    - Joint consideration of flags and evidence for organisational assessment score
  - **Stage 3**
    - Draft findings agreed and shared with area and government office

- **Joint inspectorate**

**September**

- **Stages 1-3**
  - Update stages 1-3
- **Stage 4**
  - Report drafted and shared
- **Stage 5**
  - Final quality assurance
- **Stage 6**
  - Share report with area and government office
- **Stage 7**
  - Final Report
The formal stages of the CAA process are outlined below.

Stages 1 to 3 of the cycle will be repeated every three months. For 2009 you will go through the cycle twice - in June and September - before you report to the public in November. The steps from September to November will include updates of stages 1 to 3, plus stages 4 to 7. These steps will enable you to prepare your judgements for public reporting.

For 2009 you will be gathering together and analysing your evidence as early as possible in the year (first stage analysis) to feed into the second stage analysis planned for late Spring and early Summer 2009. You will need to gain a full understanding of the local context and the local priorities. In particular, for the area assessment you should familiarise yourself with the priorities and ambitions set out in the relevant local or multi area agreements, and sustainable community strategies. You should also be familiar with any local reporting against these. These will provide a starting point for your analysis.

Because the area assessment is about place it will also be important that you understand any key issues affecting the area which may not be directly in the control of local partners, such as the recession. Many issues span geographical boundaries so you will need to consider and understand how local aspirations, problems and responses fit with the wider geographical context.

You will be using the joint assessment system to share evidence and develop your report content. More information about the joint assessment system is in section 5.2.

**Stage 1: The first stage analysis**

Each inspectorate will review and analyse the available evidence within their remit to contribute to an initial view about the area and the organisations within it. They will undertake this initial analysis of national data and other evidence while taking account of national priorities (drawing on the ten themes set out in appendix 1) and the local context and priorities. The inspectorates will tag evidence relating to outcomes in the area, and bring together evidence about the effectiveness of organisations in the area, as appropriate.

Where a remit is cross-cutting in nature, for example, community safety, the key community safety inspectorates will come together to analyse and tag their evidence.
Each inspectorate will tag evidence, outcomes and issues, before uploading it to the joint assessment system, to highlight:

- significant concerns and risks (red tags); and
- exceptional performance, outstanding improvement or promising innovation which other can learn from (green tags).

Any evidence which is tagged will warrant further joint consideration and analysis. This should establish, for example, whether adequate action is being taken to tackle a concern, any improvement is sustainable, or others might learn from the success of local partners.

Paragraph 63 of the CAA framework document sets out the types of circumstances in which we might report a red flag. This same list will inform tagging. You might therefore tag evidence which suggests that:

- locally agreed priorities do not reflect evident and pressing need;
- insufficient account is being taken of inequality;
- insufficient account is being taken of people whose circumstances make them vulnerable or who are at risk of avoidable harm;
- performance is poor, slipping or not improving;
- service or outcome standards are unacceptable; or
- improvement is not on track to achieve a target.

Inspectorates may also tag evidence which could point to an underlying issue or concern, such as governance arrangements – including for partnership working or financial circumstances which could have an impact on outcomes.

Inspectorates should also highlight evidence which may inform reporting against key local priorities, and identify any questions or queries that they may wish to analyse further. To identify this in the joint assessment system you should use a clear marker.

**Evidence and joint assessment**

You will use a range of evidence to inform your emerging judgements and scores. At stage 1, you will use your own inspectorate’s arrangements for quality assuring your evidence. All evidence will be relevant to the subject matter, reliable and as up-to-date as possible. The relevance and reliability of evidence will help to determine the relative weight you should give to it when establishing the facts and forming judgements. Other factors may also influence the weight given to evidence, such as benchmarking or comparative information and the extent to which the evidence is representative. Some pieces of evidence may be given less weight than others when you form judgements. You need to document your decisions about weight and clearly reflect these decisions in any feedback to local partners.

The evidence you tag will be stored on the joint assessment system and available to all participating inspectorates and auditors.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Much of the evidence that you will use for the very first stage 1 analysis in 2009 will already be public. You should seek to share with local partners and organisations any new evidence that is not available to the public, and which you intend to use, as early as is practical.

Evaluation and judgements

As potential flags, tags are cues for discussion about significant issues, successes and concerns in an area. They can relate to any of the three questions in the area assessment. As they emerge from each inspectorate’s initial analysis, tags enable individual inspectorates to feed in issues for joint analysis and discussion. New tags may also arise as part of joint inspectorate analysis and discussions. The view that an issue needs tagging rests at the first stage of evidence analysis with the lead inspectorate. Once tags have been formally applied and uploaded in the joint assessment system, you should not remove them. This is because they form an important part of the evidence trail. Also, they may be relevant to inspection planning. If a concern remains it could trigger an inspection.

Where evidence or an issue is tagged red it means there are some concerns about current performance, performance trends and/or future prospects for improvement. Where evidence is tagged green it means that the issue warrants further investigation to see if it meets the criteria for a green flag.

Individual inspectorates will explain why any evidence or issue has been tagged for joint analysis and discussion and indicate its significance in relation to local outcomes. The decision to allocate a tag will be made after considering the combined effect of the scale of impact and seriousness of the issue. There are trade offs: a serious issue impacting on relatively few people, or a less serious issue impacting on all people, may both warrant a tag.

Any tag means that an issue will need to be discussed at the joint inspectorate second stage analysis to agree, for example: if additional evidence is needed; whether the concern is significant enough to flag; whether or not it is being adequately addressed by local partners. Inspectorates can individually and jointly tag evidence, although most tags are likely to emerge from individual inspectorates as part of the stage 1 analysis. Tags can only be turned into flags if all CAA inspectorates agree with this decision. Any discussion, agreement or disagreement must be recorded to ensure there is a clear audit trail.
Stage 2: The second stage analysis

While you will liaise regularly as necessary with partner inspectorates, every three months you will be involved in formally sharing and reviewing the evidence of all the inspectorates. This review will enable the inspectorates to:

- take stock of the latest evidence;
- sum up their emerging conclusions and judgements;
- share tags and information with partner inspectorates through the joint assessment system; and
- consider whether to propose undertaking any triggered inspections - exceptionally to inform the assessment, or to address serious and urgent concerns.

The CAA Lead will coordinate the joint analysis and synthesise the evidence supplied by all the inspectorates, together with other information available at that stage (for example, a local strategic partnership self-assessment).

The CAA Lead will build an emerging picture from the analysis to inform joint inspectorate discussions. The CAA Lead will, for example, identify where there is triangulation of evidence, where the evidence seen together points to underlying issues, or where there are gaps in evidence.

The joint inspectorate discussions for the stage 2 review could take the form of a round table meeting, video or telephone conferencing or a series of activities to exchange information and enable discussion. The CAA Lead will identify with the other inspectorates the most appropriate and proportionate ways to liaise and draw on respective contributions. Individual inspectorates will also analyse their evidence in preparation for the formal joint-inspectorate discussion.

Independent experts can be involved in these joint discussions, where appropriate, on a proportionate basis, to focus on complex and higher risk issues. Any such involvement needs to be discussed by all inspectorates and subject to an agreed approach.

All meetings should be minuted and the CAA Lead should update the joint assessment system to reflect the agreements.

Joint evidence analysis

Through the joint analysis you will work together to identify the emerging picture for area assessment and organisational assessment (managing performance theme) judgements.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Identifying possible links between information from a wide range of sources and offering fresh insights is how CAA can add most value. The joint work should enable you to find new knowledge and insights that are not possible for a single inspectorate to identify. As part of the second stage analysis you should:

- sift and synthesize the evidence to draw together related red tags, related green tags and other significant findings, consolidating tags where they relate to a root cause, underlying or cross-cutting issue. If necessary, generate new tags to highlight cross-cutting and underlying issues;

- identify where red tags should not become a flag because there is clear evidence that local partners are tackling the concern successfully so that prospects for improvement are adequate. Decide in these cases whether you will report the issue to give public assurance that a concern or risk is being tackled effectively;

- identify where red or green tags are not significant enough to flag or report;

- identify any local priorities or issues where you will want to report a judgement because of its local importance, even though the related evidence is not currently tagged;

- identify where area assessment tags and reported judgements will impact on the organisational assessment report and/or scores and check to see if any emerging organisational assessment findings should impact on area assessment judgements and reports;

- consider any feedback or interpretation from local partners and other stakeholders which may help you draw out what the evidence means for future prospects;

- identify where you need more information or evidence to come to robust conclusions and joint judgements, and agree how best to access it; and

- record the information, evidence and discussions which will form your audit trail to help explain how you have arrived at your emerging conclusions and judgements.

Through your discussions with inspectorate colleagues as part of stage 2 you should seek to:

- come to a shared understanding about the meaning of the evidence and agreeing the emerging findings and any draft judgements or scores which flow from the evidence;
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- identify issues which need additional evidence or analysis before judgements can be agreed;

- agree any additional support or input you need to come to judgements, including from colleagues and independent experts. For the CAA Lead this will mean drawing on the expertise of regional knowledge leads and national service heads, among others;

- agree arrangements for sharing information and the emerging picture with other colleagues as part of an integrated quality assurance approach, and prepare for independent review panels;

- agree whether it is appropriate to put forward proposals for triggered inspections in the short, medium or long term; and

- draft the report content and agree what will be shared, and how, with local partners and organisations, and government offices in the regions, including as part of wider improvement planning.

In deciding whether any tags should become draft flags you should consider the scale of the impact and the level of seriousness. When you share the emerging picture with local partners or their representatives you should highlight any possible flags. You will need to establish whether there is a shared understanding about what the evidence is telling us, and its significance.

For further guidance about inspection and improvement planning, see section 15. You should integrate such planning in your discussions about the area and organisational assessments.

If you agree that additional evidence is needed, remember that you should do only what is necessary to come to a robust and credible judgement. You should take every opportunity to reduce your administrative impact.

**Evaluation and judgements**

The decision whether to tag is made by individual inspectorates or jointly, but a decision to turn a tag into a flag in the joint area assessment is always a joint inspectorate decision.

Green and red flags will identify issues that are very significant in terms of importance and/or impact. They may be identified because they affect particular localities or communities or groups of individuals. Whether or not a red tag becomes a red flag will depend on whether the related concerns or risk are being adequately addressed by local partners. You will therefore need to agree whether or not there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that there is at least adequate capacity to bring about the necessary improvements. If this is not clear, you may need to agree how to access further evidence to inform your joint judgement.
Whether or not a green tag becomes a green flag will depend on whether the exceptional performance or outstanding improvement is sustainable. Or it will depend on whether the identified innovative practice has promising prospects. It will also always depend on whether others could learn from the success. You will need to jointly agree whether any further work to establish this is necessary.

You will also need to decide how your emerging findings and supporting evidence will be shared with local partners, and the relevant organisations in the area.

To support quality assurance and ensure that all evidence has been appropriately considered you should record your decisions that impact on the assessments. For example, why a tag did or did not result in a flag or a judgement, or how an issue that did not warrant a tag at the initial stage became relevant when considered in the context of other tags or evidence. These issues for discussion might not result in tags or flags, but may become part of the final report or may need to be revisited at a later date. Draft judgements will be automatically linked to the analysed evidence that you used to make the judgements.

You should use the joint assessment system to store information about improvement or inspection activity underway or required. This should be recorded in the joint assessment system to support judgements about whether what is currently underway is adequate enough to address any risks or concerns. Where tags or flags result in new improvement activity, you should record this in the joint assessment system to track progress, and record the impact of our assessments for CAA evaluation.

To keep track of the dynamic nature of the assessments, the CAA Lead should log on the joint assessment system all key decisions, discussion points and agreements which emerge from regular engagement and which form the basis of the assessments. Any presentations and draft reports shared with local partners should also be filed for the audit trail.

Where secondary analysis has been complex or inconclusive you may refer particular issues in an area or organisational assessment to national overview. See also section 13.3 on national overview arrangement.

You should refer to section 13.4 about the role of expert advisory panels, which will look at a sample of proposed red and green flags and draft report text.
Using flags

Flags relate to question 3 of the area assessment. They will focus the assessment on outcomes and help you to report your judgements clearly and unambiguously to local people, local partners and government departments. We do not anticipate reporting a large number of red and green flags for any area. Some areas may have no flags and flags may differ in the scale of the issues identified.

When deciding what to ‘flag’ remember the key CAA principles and purposes. You should use red flags sparingly to focus the attention of local partners on very significant issues which, if tackled differently, will have a demonstrable impact on improving the quality of life of our communities.

The CAA framework document describes green and red flags as follows:

- **Green flags** represent exceptional performance or outstanding improvement which is resulting in proven delivery of better outcomes for local people that are sustainable and inspectorates jointly consider others could learn from. Good or very good practice is not sufficient. Nor is rapid improvement that joint inspectorates are not confident can be sustained. Green flags will also be used to highlight innovative practice that has promising prospects of improving outcomes for local people that the inspectorates jointly consider others can learn from.

- **Red flags** represent 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.

Stage 3: Sharing your draft findings with the area and government offices in the regions

The CAA Lead will coordinate the communication with local partners and organisations. He or she will invite local partners to comment on the evidence used, the meaning drawn from it and the emerging picture. Any comments will be considered and a response provided by the inspectorates jointly.

In the periods between the quarterly reviews the CAA Lead will help coordinate engagement with local partners and other stakeholders to ensure that the assessment process is taken forward, the required evidence obtained, and further emerging judgements discussed. The CAA Lead will consult inspectorate partners about any service specific engagement that is required, to try to avoid duplication of effort while enabling inspectorates’ necessary engagement on service matters to be maintained. Throughout this process transparency must be maintained so that inspectorate colleagues and others involved in quality assurance have an opportunity to help shape, and ensure consistency between, the judgements that are being made.
September onwards: update of stages 1 to 3, plus stages 4, 5, 6 and 7: the run-up to publication

In October you will jointly agree the final draft of the area assessment and present it to local partners. You will also agree and present the draft organisational report content and overall organisational assessment scores to each relevant organisation, as appropriate. The CAA Lead will be responsible for drafting the reports and communicating the judgements to councils, fire and rescue authorities and local strategic partnerships.

The CAA Lead should seek to resolve any differences of view between the inspectorates and local partners and organisations. Matters to resolve might include the evidence being used, the report content and the judgements being made, throughout the year. If disagreements remain, the local strategic partnership or relevant organisation may request a formal review. Care Quality Commission and Ofsted will deal with any reviews about the annual ratings for adult social care and children’s services respectively.

In the notes of meetings and other liaison the CAA Lead will need to record key agreements, queries and decisions about the emerging picture, any area and organisational assessment judgements and scores and what will be shared with the local partnerships, other stakeholders and organisations. The CAA Lead should keep a copy of any notes and records which help keep track of how evidence has informed judgements for the joint assessment system, and make these accessible to local strategic partnership partners if they ask to see them.

You should integrate inspection planning and improvement planning discussions into the assessment process. And, subject to agreements about confidentiality, discuss with local partners and organisations your proposals for triggered inspections. See section 15 for more guidance on these topics.

5.2 Joint assessment system

What’s this about?

The joint assessment system is one of the electronic tools that you will use to manage your evidence and support joint inspectorate judgements.

You will use your own inspectorate’s system to:

- store evidence sources and your initial evidence for stage 1 analysis; and
- bring together your evidence and analyse it to make decisions about tags (if appropriate) for the area assessment and emerging judgements for the organisational assessment.
Why is it important?

The joint assessment system will enable each inspectorate to share its initial analysis of evidence (including tags where appropriate) with other inspectorate colleagues and auditors. It will enable the analyses to be brought together to inform draft and final judgements. It will provide a clear audit trail from the initial evidence to the final judgements and support transparent feedback to local bodies. This will include tracking any key points in the process, for example, feedback to local partners on your draft judgements and the evolution of emerging judgements based on joint inspectorate discussions. It will also be used to support quality assurance and will be fully integrated with public reporting, inspection planning and wider improvement planning.

The joint assessment system will help us identify what information we hold and so help us to make a reality of the COUNT principle - collect once, use numerous times. You will use it to store your judgements about each area and the organisations within it in one place. It will therefore help you to identify linkages across different priorities, and the evidence relating to services and outcomes so you can draw rounded conclusions about prospects for future improvement.

You must ensure that you keep sufficient information in the joint assessment system so that you can trace your judgements between different recording systems.

You should record all key decisions, discussion points, and agreements which form the basis of your individual and overall judgements. The records should make clear where all supporting evidence and analysis material can be found, as some will not be held on the joint assessment system.

Principles of the joint assessment system

Each inspectorate will analyse its evidence to come to an initial view about the area and the organisations we will assess. This will include identifying any tags for local priorities and area assessment themes, and emerging scores and judgements for the organisational assessment. Each inspectorate will contribute its analysis, not raw evidence, to the joint assessment system at agreed points in time. You will be able to review the contributions of others, so that you can review all the evidence and make links between themes, areas, organisations and the respective assessments.

Inspectorates will use their own systems for storing and undertaking the initial analysis of evidence. For example the Audit Commission will use a tool called TeamMate to record its judgements for the managing performance theme.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

You will be able to bring together all the contributions under the area assessment themes, three questions, local priorities and organisational assessment to come up with an initial joint inspectorate view on emerging thinking, gaps and draft judgements (including draft flags and scores). You will record this on the joint assessment system. Draft judgements can be linked to the analysed evidence that was used to make the judgements.

To support quality assurance and ensure that all evidence has been appropriately considered you will be able to record the decisions that impact on the assessments, for example why a tag did, or did not, result in a flag. You will also be able to record issues for discussion, which have come out of the analysis. For example, something that does not warrant a tag at the initial stage but might be relevant when considered in the context of other evidence. Some issues for discussion may not result in tags or flags, but will need to be tracked because they may become part of the final report or may need to be revisited at a later date.

You will be able to update draft judgements that have been recorded on the system. For example, any changes to emerging judgements can be updated on the basis of new evidence, discussion across the inspectorates and feedback from local partners. In this way you can use the joint assessment system to build over time the story of the place and the public sector organisations within it.

Public reporting tools are an integral part of the joint assessment system. Judgements and narratives will be drawn directly from the joint assessment system for any reports. As well as being able to extract local reports, we will be able to extract information for national reports to, for example, analyse sector-wide trends.

You should use the joint assessment system to store information about improvement mapping, and use it to inform your inspection planning. Improvement activity underway and inspection plans, should be recorded in the joint assessment system to inform your area assessment judgements relating to whether what is being done is currently adequate enough to address any risks or concerns. Where tags or flags result in new improvement activity, you should record this in the joint assessment system so you can track progress, and record the impact of our assessments for CAA evaluation.

The Audit Commission’s auditors will have access to the joint assessment system to enable them to consider whether there is any information that may be relevant to their work on use of resources. Auditors will also be able to place relevant finalised audit reports, unless there are any specific reasons why these cannot be made available to third parties, into the joint assessment system to help inform inspectorates’ joint work on area and organisational assessments. Use of resources scored judgements will be input into the joint assessment system once they have been subject to national quality assurance arrangements. The area, local partners, the bodies we assess and other stakeholders will not be provided with direct access to the joint assessment system.
We are developing a policy about the retention of evidence in the joint assessment system. As soon as it is available, we will update the guidance.

5.3 Timelines for year 1

The inspectorates will report CAA assessments each year for areas and organisations in November. Throughout the course of the year CAA leads, or an appropriate member of his or her area team, will keep local partners and organisations informed of their emerging thinking and access additional evidence. At key points in the year the inspectorates will more formally share their joint emerging thinking with local strategic partnerships and organisations. They will also elicit feedback on the joint emerging picture. The information below gives the broad dates for year one along with a summary of the activity due to take place.

April to early May

- Each inspectorate will complete its stage 1 analysis, often using evidence and judgements already shared or in the public domain.
- Inspectorates will engage, as appropriate, with stakeholders to discuss new evidence and/or share new or emerging findings.
- Each inspectorate will upload its analysis to the joint assessment system.
- Inspection plans already agreed for 2009/10 will be published.

Early May to early June

- Inspectorates will undertake the stage 2 analysis and joint quality assurance. The initial analysis will be brought together in the joint assessment system under the area assessment themes, questions, local priorities and organisational assessment themes.
- Inspectorates will discuss the likely focus of each area assessment and organisational assessment.
- Inspectorates will agree key issues. For example, relating to tags, draft judgements, draft managing performance theme scores, draft flags, reporting, evidence gaps and how to address them.
- Inspectorates will agree a joint emerging picture to share with local partners and organisations.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- Inspectorates will create an audit trail on the joint assessment system to record all key discussions, decisions, draft judgements and information shared with others.
- Inspectorates will consider the implications for inspection planning and improvement planning.
- Inspectorates will liaise with government offices in the regions, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

June

- Joint inspectorate national overview activity takes place.
- Inspectorates agree issues to refer to the expert advisory panels.

By the end of June

- CAA Leads (or an appropriate member of his or her area team) will share the joint emerging picture with local partners or their representatives, and organisations.
- CAA Leads will seek to reach provisional agreement on uncontroversial draft report text and emerging judgements where possible.
- Inspectorates will obtain, share and analyse further evidence on any remaining issues, using the most efficient and least intrusive means.

Late June and July

- Expert advisory panels meet.

July

- Inspectorates liaise about follow up issues for the assessments, reports, inspection planning and wider improvement planning.
- Where issues are agreed with local partners and organisations, CAA Leads should bank draft report text for the September review.
- Inspectorates consider what, if any, further work is necessary and agree a proportionate approach.
- Inspectorates should keep the administrative impact to a minimum and gather only as much evidence as they need to make robust and credible judgements. CAA Leads will coordinate further work and engagement.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

August

- Inspectorates will undertake further fieldwork and analysis, as necessary.
- CAA Leads will add more text to draft reports and continue communicating with local partners and organisations.
- Draft scores will be quality assured for the organisational assessment and use of resources assessments (police, fire and councils).

September

- Draft (unpublished) scores for the organisational assessment and the use of resources assessment will be available for use.
- Inspectorates will undertake focused work on the managing performance theme, taking account of Care Quality Commission and Ofsted graded assessments when they become available.
- Inspectorates will agree the managing performance theme scores, and discuss draft overall scores for the organisational assessments.
- CAA Leads will continue to coordinate joint inspectorate engagement with local partners and organisations to further reduce or remove issues of disagreement.

Mid September to mid October

- A cut off will apply to most sources of evidence.
- CAA Leads will refine draft report text and load it onto the joint assessment system.

October

- Organisational assessments will be completed.
- Joint inspectorate national overview work will take place.
- Inspectorates will review and agree the area assessment judgements.
- Inspectorates will identify what local partners intend to do to address any red flags, to inform the area assessment report.
- Inspectorates and CAA Leads will make the final adjustments to area assessment report text and engage further with local partners.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- Inspectorates will draw together inspection planning proposals for 2010/11 in light of wider improvement planning discussions and pass recommendations to the national inspection planning group.

**Mid October to mid November**

- Inspectorates will consider any formal representations made by local strategic partnerships about red flags and by individual organisations about organisational assessment scores.
- Inspectorates will determine which, if any, representations will be accepted for formal review.
- We will confirm the dates for challenge and review following our consultation on the procedures.

**By the end of November**

- All area assessment and organisational assessment reports will be published.

**December**

- Inspectorates will review the outcome of the 2009 assessments and consider the focus of those for 2010.
- Inspectorates will identify major issues on which evidence is likely to be sought.
- Inspectorates will use the CAA results to take forward wider improvement planning discussions and finalise inspection plans for 2010/11.

**January 2010**

- Inspectorates will tag issues and evidence in the joint assessment system.
- Inspectorates will start conversations with local partners and organisations to agree principal areas of focus for the 2010 assessments.
Throughout the year you should:

- Ensure there is regular communication between inspectorates and the auditor;
- Engage in a proportionate way with local partners and others, such as government offices in the regions, and regional improvement and efficiency partnerships;
- Contribute to inspection planning and wider improvement planning and update published inspection plans as necessary;
- Contribute to joint learning and knowledge sharing; and
- Contribute to CAA evaluation and methodology review.

5.4 Planning and resourcing

One of the key principles of CAA is proportionality and efficiency. Joint working by the inspectorates will not entail every inspectorate being represented at every meeting. Nor will it mean a one size fits all approach to our respective contributions. Inspectorates will contribute in ways, and to the extent relevant to each place, bearing in mind the local context and priorities for improvement.

Each inspectorate has identified or appointed senior level personnel who will be working together in localities to oversee the development and implementation of CAA.

The Audit Commission has appointed CAA Leads and the Care Quality Commission has appointed area managers to 41 groupings of councils. These will be grouped to reflect the nine regional government offices. The Audit Commission has a head of operations for each government office and the Care Quality Commission has a regional director. Close working between the heads of operations, regional managers and the government office deputy directors will be essential.

The Care Quality Commission’s area managers’ span of responsibility will cover assessments of health and social care for their areas. The Care Quality Commission will provide assessment data, taking into account the full range of its activities including the annual health check, annual assessment of adult social care, inspections, investigations, special studies and regulatory work. The Care Quality Commission will review, assess and report on the:

- provision of health care by each national health service provider;
- provision or commissioning of health care by each primary care trust; and
 provision or commissioning of adult social services by each English local authority.

As part of its new organisation, Ofsted will provide a new and specialist team of inspectors who will work with other inspectorates in carrying out CAA. Inspectors will have detailed expertise that reflects Ofsted’s broad remit of education, children’s services and skills. Each inspector has specific responsibility for different geographical areas, aligned to the boundaries of the government offices in the regions, and of areas of work, but will be flexible enough to contribute to the work of others. These arrangements will be complemented by other inspectors who will maintain routine links with each area. Ofsted will contribute to triggered inspections as resources allow.

Locally the CAA Leads, area managers and specialist inspectors will work together to provide the individual and joint judgements about the outcomes in their areas and the individual service and organisational assessments that they need to make.

This will be complemented by resources from the criminal justice inspectorates who will remain organised at a national level and will allocate resources on a local basis to work with area teams.

The inspectorates will also continue to provide a central coordination function across the inspectorates at a national level. Each inspectorate will enable access to relevant expertise when it is needed locally. For example, the Audit Commission will draw on the expertise and capacity of national policy leads, colleagues in knowledge networks and colleagues in local area teams.
Section 6: Working together

The successful implementation of CAA will necessitate collaborative working between councils, local partners (including the third and private sectors), the inspectorates, government offices in the regions, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and others.

This guidance will help provide a consistent approach to recording evidence, making judgements and sharing findings but ultimately, success will rely on us developing strong working relationships at local and national levels.

The following guidance sets out the broad framework for joint inspectorate working and will help to shape the relationship with other stakeholders so our lines of communication are clearly explained and understood. It does not seek to exert control over any of the internal arrangements of any of the inspectorates.

You need to understand this part of the guidance in the context of the analytical framework in section 5.1 and section 5.3 which sets out the timetable of activity through the year.

For more information about the respective roles of the inspectorates see appendix 2. For more information on how we will work with government offices in the regions and regional improvement and efficiency partnerships see section 15.

6.1 Working with inspectorate colleagues

As inspectorate colleagues working on the area and organisational assessments you will need to communicate with each other, as necessary. This will help to ensure you can keep each other up-to-date with significant developments which may impact on your respective assessments and quarterly evidence reviews. Regular conversations and communication will enable you to jointly respond quickly and effectively as issues arise. This will be proportionate to need and make best use of available resources.

The CAA trials endorsed the value of face-to-face communication and ‘round-table’ meetings in sharing evidence and making joint judgements. They also highlighted the need to have proportionate representation of the inspectorates, so that the input of each can be risk-based and focused. You will therefore need to consider how best to liaise for the quarterly formal evidence reviews (see section 5.1). Where face-to-face meetings are needed, forward planning will be key to ensuring attendance and availability of the appropriate representatives.
Each inspectorate works to a set of values. While there is some variation in these values, reflecting what we each do and the intended impact of our work, there are some common core themes. The most common of these relate to transparency and independence, promoting improvement, reporting to the public, and focusing on users of services.

### 6.2 Managing relationships with local partners and partnerships

The area assessment is about outcomes, not processes. You should therefore focus on the impact, results and proven effectiveness of the arrangements of the local strategic partnership, rather than the arrangements in their own right. Nonetheless, crucial to your ability to assess the prospects of outcomes being achieved will be your ability to communicate an understanding of what local partners are seeking to achieve and how they are working together to achieve it.

Any contact with local strategic partnerships, other partners and councillors must be well managed, clearly focused and adapted to fit local arrangements and circumstances. You will need to balance the requirement to deliver on our principles for transparency and a more open approach to sharing information and emerging judgements while ensuring any engagement is proportionate and efficiently handled.

#### No surprises principle to evidence sharing

Openness and transparency will be the keys to establishing the credibility of the process and of the judgements that you will make. The assessments will develop over the year and must be the subject of regular discussion with the local strategic partnership and assessed organisations. In particular, partners and organisations should be informed about the nature and source of any evidence that you are using and be given an opportunity to discuss its implications for emerging CAA judgements. They should be able to see clearly that the information they have provided has been understood and used appropriately. Differences of interpretation or potential disagreements should be addressed as they arise. Partners should not feel that CAA judgements, negative or positive, are being made behind the scenes and not shared. The aim should be that by the time the area and organisational assessments have to be finalised they contain little or nothing that has not been shared and discussed with the local strategic partnership or organisation(s).

Where there is scope to agree about the prospects of particular outcomes being achieved, these agreements should be reached as early as possible. This will enable the assessments to be focused more precisely on remaining areas of uncertainty or potential dispute as the year progresses.
**Role of joint inspectorates**

There will be at least four occasions across a full year when the inspectorates present their joint view of progress on the area assessment, what judgements can safely be made and where areas of concern or uncertainty are still to be resolved. In the intervening period the Audit Commission’s CAA Lead will coordinate communication with the local strategic partnership, local councils, third and private sectors and fire and rescue authorities to obtain and discuss further evidence and emerging judgements on the no surprises principle. Such discussions cannot practicably involve the whole local strategic partnership. CAA Leads will therefore need to agree with the local strategic partnership the identity of a person or group of people authorised to speak on its behalf. Other multi agency partnerships may also want to identify representatives to speak on their behalf, for example, health and well-being partnerships, crime and disorder reduction partnerships.

**Role of the CAA Leads**

CAA Leads work for the Audit Commission and are responsible for coordinating the contributions of the joint inspectorates and providing a focal point for the CAA process in each area. Initially, CAA Leads can make an important contribution in helping partners to understand more about the ambition for CAA and how it will work. Not all local strategic partnerships are the same and CAA Leads and/or members of their area support teams will need to take time to get to know their local strategic partnerships. CAA Leads should agree an approach to engaging the local strategic partnership and its partners locally.

It will not always be practicable for CAA Leads personally to engage, attend every relevant meeting or be the principal point of contact with every partner. The frequency and extent of engagement will vary depending on local circumstances. CAA Leads will need to prioritise and target engagement where it is most needed. They will be managing a small area team, members of which will often take on responsibilities for regular engagement. CAA Leads should ensure that there is enough contact with the chairs of the local strategic partnerships and local area agreement boards. In addition the leaders of councils, where he or she is not the chair of the local strategic partnership or local area agreement board is a key person with whom the CAA Lead will need to build a strong relationship and mutual understanding.

CAA Leads also need to consider how to engage executive member portfolio holders, leading specific themes in the local area agreement/sustainable community strategy. Portfolio holders will be able to provide a more detailed understanding of the challenges and issues involved in particular areas/services. Engagement with portfolio holders will need to be set in the context of engagement with other partners on the local strategic partnership. Non-executive members, particularly those involved in scrutiny, may be able to bring a helpful perspective to understanding challenges involved with particular issues.
CAA leads will be representing all the inspectorates when they engage with local partners about the joint emerging picture and draft CAA reports.

CAA leads will rely on the work of the Audit Commission’s auditors to reduce the need for them to engage on a regular basis with organisations. CAA leads will also share information with auditors as appropriate, and the Audit Commission expects CAA leads and auditors to liaise with each other throughout the year to support the delivery of their respective roles and responsibilities.

The guidance for use of resources is available on the Audit Commission’s website. Information on the role of auditors is available on the Audit Commission’s website.

Engaging with councillors

Councillors will want to engage with the inspectorates about CAA. The lighter touch approach to assessment should, in particular, not prevent direct engagement with elected representatives. The CAA leads should agree with councils how best to develop an integrated approach to the involvement of councillors in CAA and other performance frameworks impacting on councils and their work with local partners.

When engaging councillors, CAA leads and members of their area support teams will need to understand the different roles councillors have and engage accordingly.

Managing relationships with partnerships in county and district council areas

CAA leads will need to engage with all district and county councils about their organisational assessment. Your engagement should always seek to strike the right balance between:

- being sufficient to deliver a robust assessment that the local bodies feel has been transparent and open; and
- not overburdening the organisations with unnecessary work or discussion.
Engagement in relation to organisational assessments should also be used to gather evidence and understanding for the area assessment, in order to make most efficient use of time and gain a good understanding of the contribution of each organisation. Engagement by inspectorates will reflect their areas of responsibilities. Ofsted and Care Quality Commission staff will engage as needed with county councils in relation to outcomes for children and adult social care, and related issues, to inform both the organisational and area assessments.

For the area assessment the focus of your attention should be driven by the evidence of outcomes, whatever geographical area they relate to. If the most pressing concerns, or impressive improvements are in, for example, housing or community safety, you are likely to spend more time with the relevant districts and their partners. The area assessment is not about council structures, so there should be no assumption that most engagement will be with any particular organisation (such as the county council).

CAA Leads and other colleagues will, of course, have to prioritise their time. The desire for engagement may vary between organisations and you will need to use your judgement to strike the right balance. In county and district areas the number and size of partnerships mean that CAA Lead will not be able to have frequent dialogue with all of them. You will need to be proportionate in your plans for engagement and CAA Leads will discuss and agree an approach that balances appropriate levels of engagement with a focus on priority issues. In doing so CAA Leads will ensure that representatives of the county and district local strategic partnerships are involved in this discussion.

In producing an area assessment that is meaningful to local communities you will draw on a wide range of evidence including performance management information produced by all local strategic partnerships and other local partnerships. This is more efficient than routinely meeting with all local strategic partnerships themselves, although over time each should be engaged directly.

The CAA Leads will coordinate engagement with whichever partnerships are crucial to understanding whether priorities set out in the local area agreement and sustainable community strategies reflect local need, the extent of progress being made and what particular barriers and levers to success exist. Such direct contacts may be infrequent for the majority of partners on local strategic partnerships and some partners will not have any direct dealings with inspectorates’ representatives. CAA Leads, in particular, will wish to focus on those partners whose contribution to an individual local area agreement target or sustainable community strategy priority is particularly important.

Any contact with individual district or county councillors or other partners will be well managed and clearly focused – recognising the pressures on their time. You will use intelligence from other activities, assessments and the work of the auditor to minimise particularly the demands on councillors’ time.
When best to engage councillors should be determined by mutual agreement as part of the overall approach to engaging localities, indicated above. Key points are likely to be:

- at the beginning of the assessment to develop a shared understanding about local context and local priorities;
- after elections;
- as emerging thoughts on the area assessment develop in late Summer/early Autumn; and
- as part of the organisation assessment.

There may also be times when councillors will wish to initiate discussions with you, for example to share the results of any area wide self-assessment or as part of the organisational assessment.

It may be necessary for you to engage with other partners. It may be appropriate, for example, for the CAA Lead or a member of their area support team to meet the National Park Authority, where one exists, because of their role in planning and economic development. Other examples of issues where direct engagement with localities may be appropriate include:

- matters which are relevant to their contribution to the local area agreement and county-wide sustainable community strategy; and
- on priorities for their geographical part of the county area.

Town and parish councils can also be a valuable source of evidence for area or organisational assessments, providing a very local view on outcomes and community engagement. In localities that have used community-led planning processes to develop priorities, it may be appropriate for the CAA Leads to engage with town and parish councils through the relevant county association or district council. It may be appropriate to use arrangements that already exist to handle communications between these councils for example, district forums or area committees. Only in exceptional cases is direct engagement with town or parish councils likely to be necessary.
Section 7: Assessment links

CAA, and especially the area assessment, is about people and places. Its focus is on the results that need to be achieved, not the processes that are in place. It will report not on systems for managing performance but on outcomes and performance.

Being about people and places means it is about understanding how partners are creating sustainable communities by addressing issues of sustainable development, diversity and equality, human rights, disadvantage, vulnerability and value for money. It is also about how even these big strategic issues overlap and interact to affect people’s quality of life. So while we must collect evidence and make judgements about specific local priorities which relate to the themes in appendix 1, the assessment will not simply be a collection of judgements about those themes. Instead it will examine whether those themes are being addressed in an integrated way that recognises how they relate to one another.

For example, when considering actions taken to promote prosperity and increase jobs, teams should look at whether those actions support or undermine environmental sustainability, how they might affect health and well-being and whether or not they are likely to improve the position of the most disadvantaged. Most importantly, concentrate on the big picture. What are partners trying to achieve? Do they understand how their various activities interact? Is there a danger that achieving one goal might undermine progress towards another? Are the required results being achieved, and will they be achieved in the future? Will the result be an increasingly sustainable and cohesive community? Note too that many issues span political boundaries so the local aspirations, problems and responses need to be considered and understood in a wider geographical context.

7.1 Links between the organisational and area assessments

All the organisational assessments in an area will inform, and be informed by, the area assessment. Central to CAA is the ‘collect once use numerous times’ (COUNT) principle. Where you can you should use the same evidence to inform both the area and organisational assessments. You should trace the organisation’s accountabilities from the organisational assessment to the area assessment and vice versa, and report any links between the judgements in your public reports.
For the council organisational assessment you will manage the links between the area and the organisational assessments by looking at how well the council delivers its own corporate services and priorities and also how well it contributes to wider area outcomes. For example, how do local planning decisions taken at a district council support the meeting of county wide affordable housing targets?

Scores and findings in the organisational assessment may influence your decisions about flags. Similarly key issues and flags reported in the area assessment could impact on the organisational assessment score, if they relate to the specific responsibilities and contributions of the organisation. You will need to consider whether anything you have reported in summary in the area assessment should be reported in more detail in the organisational assessment.

### 7.2 Links between use of resources and managing performance theme

In councils the organisational assessment comprises the three themes for use of resources with a fourth theme that looks at how well the council manages its performance.

The Audit Commission is responsible for the overall use of resources judgements that feed into the organisational assessment. The Audit Commission’s use of resources framework and the use of resources guidance on the approach that auditors will follow are available on the Audit Commission’s website.

The use of resources assessment considers how well an organisation is managing and using its resources to deliver value for money and better and sustainable outcomes for local people. The assessment is structured into three themes that focus on the importance of sound and strategic financial management, strategic commissioning and good governance, and the effective management of natural resources, assets and people. The auditor provides a score and the judgements for each of these three themes. The three themes are then drawn together by the Audit Commission to produce an overall scored judgement on value for money in the use of resources.
Working with the auditor

The CAA Lead should liaise regularly with the auditor as part of their work on the managing performance theme. This will be particularly appropriate where this is on behalf of the other inspectorates for London, metropolitan, unitary and county councils. In particular, the CAA Lead will need to talk to the auditor to:

- ensure they do not duplicate requests for evidence;
- help inform the work needed to reach a rounded assessment of how effective the organisation is overall; and
- consider how best to report the organisational assessment judgements.

The evidence that the CAA Lead and the auditor gather will inform each other’s assessment. In particular there are strong links in the following areas between the use of resources and the managing performance themes:

- whether the council integrates financial planning with service planning;
- how costs influence decision making;
- how it uses financial performance information to monitor performance;
- how its vision and intended outcomes shapes commissioning;
- whether it produces reliable and relevant information to support decision making;
- whether it uses good governance to maintain a focus on purpose and vision; and
- how the organisation manages assets and its workforce to deliver priorities and services.

The CAA Lead and the auditor will also need to liaise with each other to consider any links between the area assessment and the individual organisational assessments. They will need to consider any evidence provided by the other inspectorates in relation to use of resources.
Section 8: Area assessment overview

To carry out the area assessment, you will consider three key overarching questions:

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

The area assessment is a forward-looking assessment focused on outcomes. The main focus of your judgements and report will therefore relate to the third question. You will need to reference your judgements and findings about the first and second questions only to give a clear context for your judgements about future prospects.

A key point of learning from the CAA trials was that these three questions should not necessarily be answered in a strict sequence, in a linear way or in order to arrive at a composite overall judgement. You should consider each of the questions in relation to each of the key local priorities and also check to see whether key national priorities are being adequately addressed where improvement or focused attention is needed.

The local priorities will vary from place to place but some key themes feature very often in local strategies and agreements, and/or national priorities. To manage your evidence you should consider using the following themes, adapting them to reflect the wording and scope of local priorities relevant to the area, as appropriate:

- How safe is the area?
- How healthy and well supported are people?
- How well is adult social care meeting people’s needs and choices?
- 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?
The guidance, in appendix 1, on these themes does not constitute formal key
lines of enquiry, performance descriptors or criteria for judgement. Because
the area assessment is not a scored judgement, such structured guidance is
not appropriate. They are designed to help you focus your assessment, and
help you assess the future prospects for local priorities which relate to these
outcomes.

We will use these themes to code our findings so that we can extract
information about particular issues. This will enable us to collate our
knowledge under a range of headings, write national reports and inform future
research and studies. You will also find it useful to bring the evidence together
under these themes so you can compare your emerging picture to that of
other areas to help you integrate knowledge sharing and quality assurance.

Also in the same appendix is some guidance about ‘How good is the well-
being of older people?’ This isn’t a specific theme for the area assessment but
most localities are considering the implications of higher percentages of the
local population being 50 or over. This guidance will help you consider this in
your assessment.

8.1 Question 1: How well do local priorities express community needs and
aspirations?

What’s this about?

This question is here to provide you with the opportunity to comment in the
public report, very briefly, about any significant issues relating to local
priorities, ambitions and targets, and about community engagement and
empowerment. Include any positive comments you may wish to make about
matters of exceptional significance, to give appropriate assurance to local
people.

The question provides you with an opportunity to raise any significant queries
or concerns you have, for example, about whether:

- a key issue or risk is not being adequately addressed;
- the local partners are not doing enough to engage with, empower or
  understand all their diverse communities;
- decisions about priorities are not grounded in sound intelligence or
good use of information; and
• targets and objectives are realistic and reasonable, while being stretching and challenging, given the required outcomes and improvement needs.

You should look not only at what is in the local area assessment or sustainable community strategies when addressing this question. The priorities could be expressed in other strategies, plans or decisions. And the local priorities won’t be static. You will need to keep up-to-date with changes and with plans already in place to review priorities and targets. You can get information about the reasons for the content of the local or multi area agreement from government offices in the regions.

We expect that you will want to raise concerns in only exceptional circumstances. And usually we would expect you to report on this question only where the answer to it has a very significant bearing on future prospects. You will need to be careful to avoid re-doing the job of government offices in the regions or asking local partners for a full justification for each of their priorities.

Question 1 may be a controversial question. We are clear that our role is not to challenge legitimate political choice. We won’t be going into areas with our own preferred list of priorities. Our aim is to support democratic decision-making by providing feedback and reports that local politicians can use to inform their reviews of local priorities. To do this effectively you should independently assess whether local decision-making and target-setting is sound, robust, reasonable and based on good use of credible shared intelligence.

You should do this in a sensitive way, which recognises the important role of locally elected politicians. And you should seek to avoid any overlap with government offices in the regions.

You will therefore need to make clear that you recognise that it is part of an elected councillors’ role to determine priorities for the local area and that CAA can be helpful to support this. It may be particularly helpful when councillors are considering wider priorities for the area. Balancing priorities and competing pressures and allocating scarce and limited resources is often a complex and difficult task. You may need to ask questions to understand the background, but your judgements should only challenge agreed priorities where there is clear evidence of a significant gap that has not been properly considered or included.

We have deliberately used the term ‘community needs and aspirations’ to enable you to consider the question from the perspective of a wide range of definitions of ‘community’. For example, different priorities may need to express the needs and aspirations of: the area’s citizens including children and young people, residents, users of public services, individuals and/or members of diverse communities, specific disadvantaged communities in the area, the national ‘community’ (society as a whole), and future generations, to take account of long-term sustainability considerations.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Why is it important?

It is important for all local public services to be able to demonstrate that they are delivering shared outcomes, based on a shared in-depth understanding of the area and its diverse communities.

If local priorities are not soundly based, or if targets are not reasonable, then the prospects of the outcomes needed being delivered may be seriously compromised. Findings under question 1 will therefore inform your key judgements under question 3.

Your findings will inform the local area agreement review and refresh. If you have any queries or concerns about the contents of the local area agreement these should be raised with government offices in the regions and local partners at the earliest opportunity.

What might you look for?

Essentially we will be looking for:

- robust decision-making across local partners;
- evidence of effective implementation of the duty to involve; and
- whether local partners are focusing on the right things.

To answer this question you may wish to explore:

- how well do local partners understand their diverse communities?
- how well do they engage with, involve and empower local people (including through the third sector)?
- how well do local people feel they are listened to? (including harder to reach/hear communities, children and young people and those at risk of poorer outcomes)?
- to what extent do local people feel their contributions make a difference to decisions about setting local priorities and are they involved in reviewing progress against them? Does this engagement encompass all communities?
- are priorities in the sustainable community strategies and local area agreement and other strategies and plans sufficiently appropriate and ambitious to meet the locality’s challenges and context?
- do they take account of national priorities and standards, inequality in the area, the needs of the most vulnerable members of the community, local needs analyses and weigh up the views of local stakeholders?
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- are ambitions and targets appropriately stretching and realistic?
- is there robust decision-making across local partners to ensure that local priorities are based on sound shared intelligence and effective use of information?

Community engagement and empowerment

To help you address some of these questions here is some further guidance on community engagement and empowerment.

What’s this about?

All people should be treated equally as citizens in the delivery of local services and facilities. To help ensure this, citizens should be able to influence the decisions of local public bodies to deliver improved, more accountable and responsive services. Without an understanding of the interests and requirements of local communities, the local strategic partnership will be less able to respond to long-term challenges such as public health, climate change and demographic fluctuations. It is about councils providing strategic and political leadership and involving the full range of stakeholders, including the community, to develop and deliver a shared vision for the area. It is about ensuring continued economic and environmental sustainability, and building strong societies in which people want to live and work and people have an increasing sense of influence over local decisions.

Why is it important?

Knowing and understanding the needs and aspirations of communities underpins the assessment of whether service delivery priorities have been established with local people’s involvement. The extent to which people feel that they can influence decisions in their local area can also impact on their perception of, and trust in, public service delivery and whether their quality of life is improving. Here, strong communication and feedback to local people is vital. Services that are not tailored towards reducing inequalities and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable can lead to community tensions in local areas and impact on economic prosperity. Areas where there is a breakdown in trust between local people and public services are less likely to be perceived as good places to live and ones where people will want to be actively engaged as citizens.
What might you look for?

In every area we will use our general questions to gather knowledge and evidence about how well local partners are engaging, empowering and involving their communities in relation to its priorities. For example, if leisure facilities for young people are a priority, how are young people being involved in deciding service priorities? We would want to understand that the area priorities have been established with the involvement of the community and that they are being involved in assessing if these priorities are being delivered.

As a result of this understanding, we may comment in our reporting on how involvement and empowerment is impacting on local partners’ prospects for improving quality of life for specific priorities, specific local groups and/or the area as a whole.

You should look for evidence as to how well public services are working in partnership to identify and understand the diverse needs of their communities. You should examine the extent to which sustainable community strategies are joined up enough to address priorities from a citizen perspective and whether priorities are determined through engagement with communities. The local strategic partnership should be able to trace how their decisions have been influenced by local concerns and the priorities of other public bodies, including each other’s value for money considerations.

You will not normally undertake any direct user focus work for CAA, such as mystery shopping, straw polls or focus groups. Instead you should assess how effectively local partners use local intelligence, data and analysis, consultation and feedback. You may need to seek further evidence to assess the quality of engagement, which could involve visiting community engagement events and considering the quality of feedback given to the community after the event. This will include considering how effectively disadvantaged groups have been engaged and if their priorities have been reflected in the overall priorities for the service or outcome.

The shift for all local public services is to demonstrate that they are delivering shared outcomes based on a common understanding of the area. To do this, they will need to demonstrate how well they coordinate their engagement activities and communicate the impact of engagement on decisions. Using a spectrum of engagement and empowerment, at one end, local bodies make decisions (and inform or consult local people) while at the other end, empowered individuals or communities make decisions themselves.
The inspectorates will be using the term ‘engagement’ to include all forms of interaction with members of the public or representatives of local people - from informing, consulting, and involving to devolving decision-making or service delivery responsibility to citizens.

You should look for evidence of appropriate engagement and empowerment being embedded as standard practice, and as being central to service delivery, policy and decision-making.

**What might you find?**

Effective community engagement and empowerment will require a balance to be struck between maximising the number of people involved and securing the involvement of local people who have difficulty having their perspectives heard.

The most relevant national indicators are national indicator 3 (civic participation) and national indicator 4 (percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality). National indicator 4 is one of the most frequently used indicators (85 nationally) from the national indicator set in local area agreement priority targets. The organisational assessment for councils has a key line of enquiry focus in the use of resources theme on how well the organisation engages local communities and stakeholders in the financial planning process.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

The duty to involve will also become a statutory requirement in April 2009 and local partners will need to demonstrate how they are informing, consulting and involving representatives of ‘local persons’ to ensure that citizens can play an active role in shaping the future of the place where they live. ‘Local persons’ are not just local residents. They include people – children and adults - who study or work in the area, visitors, users of services, local third sector groups, businesses and bodies such as parish councils.

Communities and Local Government via the IDeA has commissioned 18 ‘empowering authorities’ to develop a sector-led framework on the characteristics of excellent engagement and empowerment and are exploring providing peer support to authorities who may need assistance with this agenda.

Reference material and further information

- local voluntary and community sector organisations will often have evidence about how well local partners are engaging with communities, including marginalised and disadvantaged communities;

- engagement with patients regarding health through LINks will be provided by the Care Quality Commission through the Compass system;

- the Care Quality Commission will have information about engagement with carers, users of adult social care services and older people;

- Ofsted are developing three new surveys on gathering the views of children and young people, children’s services professionals and the third sector;

- HMIC will have information about local policing pledges; policing pledges are available on every police force web-site and set out what local people can expect from their local police service and neighbourhood policing teams;

- Regional Empowerment Partnerships will have information about local empowerment activity and the performance of local strategic partnerships on the effectiveness of their performance. They also provide improvement support for authorities at a regional level in conjunction with the government offices in the regions and regional improvement and efficiency partnerships;

- View the Communities and Local Government statutory guidance for local authorities and their partners on creating strong, safe and prosperous communities. It covers the duty to involve and duties relating to local area agreements set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007; and
8.2 Question 2: How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?

What's this about?

This question looks at what is happening now. It asks whether there is evidence that the outcomes and improvements that are needed are actually being delivered on the ground. It is not about plans, but about performance. You will wish to give particular attention to progress on delivering local priorities, but not to the exclusion of other important national or local issues.

Why is it important?

Firstly because local people and government are entitled to information about what is happening now. In addition, however, information about current and recent performance will inform your judgements about the future. Where there is a track record of achievement in addressing an issue, or where the rate of improvement appears to be fast enough to achieve the desired goals, you may consider that it is legitimate to be confident about future prospects. Where that is not the case, your assessment of current performance will help you identify the additional evidence you need to gather or analyse in order to answer question three.

What might you look for?

For your assessment you may want to look at how well the area is currently performing in relation to: its targets; its own performance levels over the last three or more years; all other areas in England; areas which have similar characteristics or ambitions for improving similar outcomes. Ofsted’s new profile of performance, updated quarterly, provides evidence of how well outcomes are being delivered in relation to children, young people and adult learners. In appendix 1 we outline some guidance about what you might look for using ten themes which are likely to feature often in local strategies and agreements, and/or which feature as key national priorities.
These ten themes will help you manage your evidence. We have chosen them because they represent the key issues that affect quality of life and many of them will therefore be referred to in the local area or multi area agreement and sustainable community strategies. In addition, government ministers will need to know about progress on these themes in different parts of the country. The government has, for example, asked us to report to the New Economic Council, initially in June 2009, our findings about how well local areas are coping with current economic conditions. However, it is important to remember that your assessment is about the place and the results that are being achieved for local people. To make that assessment you will need to understand the interrelationships between different activities and how they come together to make the desired impact on people’s lives. Rather than treating community safety, health and well-being and economic development, for example, as if they were separate issues you are likely to want to describe how these issues are interacting to the advantage or disadvantage of particular communities.

Crucial to the ability to make judgements about the achievement of results will be the quality of the information that local partners are able to provide. This should typically be the information that they are using to manage their own performance. If that information is not available, or focuses on inputs and processes rather than on results, you might legitimately ask how, in its absence, partners can be confident that they are achieving their goals? This point will be especially relevant when considering issues that apply to particular localities. If the objective is to reduce inequalities between wards or districts, for example, you should expect to see performance information disaggregated to a sufficiently local level to enable variable rates of progress to be measured and management action to be taken where necessary.

8.3 Question 3: What are the prospects for future improvement?

What’s this about?

How confident are you that the outcomes and ambitions for the area will be successfully delivered, in line with local priorities, local needs and aspirations and the targets and objectives which local partners have set?

If there are any serious weaknesses or concerns about particular services, particular communities or outcomes – how confident are you that these will be effectively addressed quickly enough?

Why is it important?

This is the main area assessment question which will form the basis of our key judgements and reports.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

The first two questions are principally important as providers of evidence for this one. With regard to the first question, if local priorities are not rooted in a full understanding of local needs and aspirations, then clearly, some important outcomes are unlikely to be addressed. And if in answering the second question a track record of strong achievement, or of failure, is identified, this will inform and focus our judgements about likely future performance. Also our focus in questions one and two on reducing inequality across diverse communities, and our emphasis on people experiencing or at risk of disadvantage, discrimination, harm or in circumstances which make them vulnerable, will be maintained in considering future outcomes.

This is the question with the greatest potential to be contentious. It is in answering this question that you will decide whether to flag any issues as red or green, and this will inevitably be a focus of attention for local partners. In addition, we are making judgements not about past performance, but about future events. There is obvious scope for challenging such judgements as speculative or subjective, and this makes it especially important that you proceed on the basis of transparency and no surprises. It is critical that you discuss with local partners the nature and interpretation of the evidence on which you are relying, and do so in sufficient time to allow differences to be aired and, where possible, resolved. You will wish to give partners the earliest possible indication of your emerging judgements about future outcomes so that they have every opportunity of drawing your attention to additional evidence before a final judgement is made. Should a judgement be challenged at the end of the year, the extent of that opportunity will influence whether the challenge is accepted.

What might you look for?

In answering the third question, and in deciding whether to ‘flag’ any issues, you should focus very clearly on outcomes. The judgement is about whether the desired results are likely to be achieved. It is not about the effectiveness of the local partnership or the robustness of its management processes.

These issues are important as a source of evidence, and may well inform your conclusion, but the judgement is about outcomes not processes. You will therefore wish to consider the progress being made by the partners in terms of real and measurable change:

- do the partners have information that indicates that results are improving?
- is the rate of improvement on a trajectory that, if maintained, would secure the desired outcome?
- if not, has anything been done to accelerate the pace of change?
- what grounds are there for believing that such action will be effective?
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

For example, in considering the current economic climate you should consider the extent to which the public services area can cope with the likely local impacts, and whether sensible steps are being taken to create a more sustainable local economy for the future.

There will however be occasions when new goals are involved, or targets have only recently been set. In such cases a track record may be absent, or cover so short a period as to give little assurance about future performance. You may therefore wish to consider whether:

- local partners are working closely together and collectively bringing to bear sufficient capacity and capability to deliver the desired results?

- the action being taken is sufficiently specific to give confidence that it will make a positive impact and give rise to the scale of change that is needed?

- improvement planning is being implemented effectively? Are robust plans in place and are key objectives and milestones being achieved?

- are there any significant weaknesses in governance, or in mechanisms for delivery, that might compromise the partnerships ability to achieve results?

You should try to come to a clear judgement if possible. But there may be times when you cannot come to a definite conclusion about whether a future outcome will or will not be achieved. Partners may be in the very early stages of progressing towards a long-term goal, or they may be responding to changes in the context in which they are working. In such circumstances you may wish to reserve judgement. It is perfectly legitimate to report concerns that a given outcome might be at risk and indicate that you will be looking for further evidence, including of progress, in the following year.

You should also bear in mind that you are looking for positive as well as negative evidence. Where outcomes appear likely to be achieved, and achieved through innovative, outstanding improvement trends or exceptional performance from which others might learn, you will wish to give credit for this and reflect it in your assessment. See section 5.1 for more information about the criteria green flags.

After November 2009 and before the next CAA reports are published in Autumn 2010, circumstances in the area will change. You will not usually remove a red flag from the area assessment report during the year. This is because you will want to assess whether any improvements are having the desired impact. But if new concerns of a very serious nature arose during the year, by exception, you might consider flagging the issue publicly at the quarterly update. You should do this only in exceptional circumstances. You would normally report back concerns to local partners at the earliest opportunity, to give them the chance to address the issue before reporting the new matter publicly.
Section 9: Organisational assessment of councils

You will carry out an organisational assessment at all councils unless any exceptional circumstances apply such as the special arrangements for councils involved in local government re-organisation.

The organisational assessment of councils consists of four themes. It combines the Audit Commission’s assessment of how well the council delivers value for money through the use of resources with an assessment of how well it manages its performance to form an assessment of overall effectiveness.

- Theme 1: managing finances;
- Theme 2: governing the business;
- Theme 3: managing resources; and
- Theme 4: managing performance.

You and the CAA Lead in particular will liaise with the auditor (see section 7.2) to make your judgements about how effective the council is. You will assess effectiveness from the perspectives of how well the council delivers value for money, how well it delivers outcomes and services alone and with partners, and how well it is improving.

The Audit Commission’s use of resources framework and the use of resources guidance on the approach that auditors will follow are available on the Audit Commission’s website.

For London, metropolitan, unitary and county councils the joint inspectorate team will jointly agree the managing performance score and the overall organisational effectiveness score. For district councils the Audit Commission will determine these scores, using evidence and judgements from partner inspectorates and the auditor.

You should use the key lines of enquiry and characteristics set out below to make your assessment of the managing performance theme.

Because the managing performance theme is scored, the characteristics should help you ensure consistency of judgement, while still enabling you to take a flexible approach and take account of the local context and local priorities.

In your public report you will include an overall score and separate scores for the use of resources theme and the managing performance theme. Inspectorate colleagues will work together and with the auditor to write a narrative to clearly explain the judgements.
Organisational assessment score for councils

The overall organisational assessment score is reached by combining the scores from the overall value for money in use of resources judgement and the managing performance theme:

- where the score is 1 for either assessment that will lead to the overall score being 1;
- where the score is the same for both assessments that score will become the overall score;
- where the scores are different for each of the two assessments you should use your professional judgement to reach an overall score. You should consider the national context and local circumstances to decide where to place more weight. You must refer to the table on page 30 of the CAA framework.

Other sectors

The form of the organisational assessment will vary in each sector to reflect the specific context and services of the organisations being assessed. The organisational assessment for the other main public service organisations, police, fire and rescue authorities, and health services are described in their own frameworks.

Guidance for the fire and rescue authority services managing performance theme is in section 10.

9.1 Council managing performance theme

Sector context

Councils are unique as organisations because of their complementary roles of participative and representative democracy. Councils are intensely political organisations influenced quite properly by the role of party politics and competing political ideologies. This has a significant impact on the structures and governance of councils. Elected councillors have particular roles in building a strong vision for their area, making choices about competing priorities, and providing challenge and review through scrutiny and overview. You should apply the managing performance and overall organisational assessment methodology in a way which reflects this sector context, and the particular circumstances of each of the councils you are assessing.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

You should use this section of the guidance to help you assess how well each council in the area is managing its performance. Other guidance and frameworks are, or will be, available to colleagues undertaking organisational assessments of other main public bodies in each area, namely, the primary care trusts, police authorities and forces, and fire and rescue authorities.

Scoring the managing performance theme

You will combine your managing performance assessment of the council with the Audit Commission’s value for money in use of resources assessment of the council. Together these assessments comprise the council’s organisational assessment.

For the two key lines of enquiry we have said why the question is important to the organisational assessment, and in particular the managing performance theme.

For the focus we have used the following headings in a flexible way:

- What’s this about?
- Performs adequately – what might you expect to see?
- Performs well - what else might you expect to see?

We have used characteristics to describe what you might expect to see where a council performs adequately, level 2 and performs well, level 3.

Performs adequately includes the characteristics of performance for level 2 and performs well includes the additional characteristics of performance for level 3. If any of the characteristics outlined in level 2 are not evident, you should consider giving a level 1 score. If the characteristics outlined in level 3 are clearly evident, and the council also clearly exceeds this level, you should consider giving a score of 4.

These characteristics of performance are integrated into the guidance, rather than presented separately. This is to reinforce the message that they are not a list of criteria or a checklist to be complied with to achieve a certain score.

Councils can become excellent in many different ways. The characteristics are therefore not intended to be prescriptive but are provided to help you reach an overall rounded judgement for the theme. Providing characteristics also makes the assessment transparent and will help you ensure our judgements are consistent with those of other inspectorate teams, while still reflective of local circumstances.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

You are not expected to score each focus bullet point, sub-heading or key line of enquiry. You might see other characteristics that enable the council to demonstrate it is performing at a particular level and these may be equally as valid as those included in the guidance. Alternatively you may find other things that are missing or weak and these may strongly influence your conclusions on the effectiveness of the council.

You should score the managing performance theme for councils using a scale of 1 to 4. The descriptors of performance are follows:

- a score of 1: performs poorly: does not meet minimum requirements
- a score of 2: performs adequately: meets only minimum requirements
- a score of 3: performs well: exceeds minimum requirements
- a score of 4: performs excellently: significantly exceeds minimum requirements

You should use the two questions that form the key lines of enquiry and the characteristics for the managing performance theme in a flexible way to help you arrive at a rounded professional judgement about how effective the council is.

The two questions are complementary and you should consider them together. In reaching your final judgement you should weight the questions based on how national priorities and local circumstances impact locally. For example, there may be some single issues that are of such significance that they weigh very heavily in reaching your conclusion, such as services to people in circumstances which make them vulnerable.

There are no rules about the relative importance of inspection scores and performance ratings which will inform the managing performance theme. But the annual performance ratings for children’s services and adult social care will carry significant weight. In using these ratings you should consider the underlying scores, as well as the overall rating. You would have to justify, for example, giving a high managing performance theme score if evidence showed that safeguarding arrangements or outcomes were inadequate.

For London, metropolitan, unitary and county councils all inspectorate colleagues will jointly agree the managing performance theme score. The Audit Commission, Care Quality Commission and Ofsted directly assess council services so they are likely to contribute most to this judgement and report.

For district councils the CAA Lead, on behalf of the Audit Commission, will score the managing performance theme and write the report drawing on evidence from inspectorates (including HMIC relating to community safety) and the auditor.
Sources of evidence

The evidence you will use for the organisational assessment will also inform the area assessment. You need to apply the COUNT principle. This means you will access or collect evidence once and use it numerous times. This is how you will avoid duplicating requests for evidence, and ensure you efficiently and effectively manage the linkages between the area assessments and the organisational assessments.

The guidance includes examples of some sources of evidence that might be available and which may be relevant for your assessment. The list is not exhaustive and is not intended to be prescriptive about the documents or sources you can use. You should draw on any sources of evidence, relevant to the national context and local circumstances that might help you answer the questions. You will need to apply risk based proportionality in deciding what, and in what depth, you review the specific issues. Your evidence should relate to three time zones to help you reach a rounded judgement:

- delivery of priorities and outcomes over the last year;
- current outcomes; and
- future prospects of improvement.

See section 9.4 for the information on sources of evidence for the managing performance theme for councils.

9.2 Council Key Line of Enquiry 4.1

How well is the organisation delivering its priority services, outcomes and improvements that are important to local people?

Key line of enquiry focus

The organisation is:

- effective in identifying and delivering priority services and outcomes;
- improving the services and outcomes for which it is responsible;
- contributing to wider community outcomes; and
- tackling inequality and improving outcomes for people in vulnerable circumstances.
Why is it important?

The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy 2008 recognises that ‘People want to live in places with good services, a safe environment, accessible transport links, a strong sense of community and opportunities for all’. It sets out the key purposes of the new local performance framework: improving the quality of life in places and better public services. The strategy makes clear that central and local government share a vision for better, more efficient, more responsive public services that ensure greater local prosperity and environmental sustainability. The outcomes to be aimed for include vibrant localities with safer, healthier, happier, more cohesive and sustainable communities. These aims can only be delivered if local public service organisations work effectively together to clearly identify and deliver what is important to local people.

The government’s vision in Excellence and fairness: achieving world class public services, states that a ‘yardstick for success should not only be whether services have improved on last year’s results but also whether they are among the best in the world’. ‘Today’s challenge is for public services to move from above average in the global league of effectiveness to the top’.

Being world class involves delivering excellent outcomes, offering personalised approaches that are responsive to individual needs, treating people with dignity and respect, designing services that fit into people’s busy lives, treating people as active partners in flexible services rather than passive recipients of a ‘one size fits all’ approach, being fair and equitable by striving to meet the distinctive needs of individuals, families and communities, tackling and reducing inequality and promoting a fairer society. The test ‘should also not be simply how public services compare against each other, but how they compare against the best provision available to those who can afford it in the very best private sector organisations, or against the most trusted third sector providers.’ Achieving world class services for all will continue to require ‘clear standards and measures, zero tolerance on underperformance, more choice and greater contestability.’ Also they will need ‘new approaches to empowering citizens and greater transparency of performance.

Part of this drive will be about strategic commissioning, which is assessed in the value for money in the use of resource themes.

The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy 2008 also recognises that ‘Delivering these improvements in the face of considerable environmental, economic and social challenges, rising public expectations and slowed growth in public spending, will require new levels of efficiency, innovation and improvement. It will require effective and transparent performance management and monitoring, so that everyone knows how they are doing on delivering their priorities, so that they learn from each other and can raise the bar of ambition’.
The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities* 2006, made clear that improvement of local public services should be led by councils working in partnership with local communities and other public service providers to meet the complex needs of individuals, families and diverse communities. The *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* contains provisions to address this and new legislation in 2009 will put Children’s Trust Boards onto a statutory footing.

*The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy 2008* recognises that ‘the longer term ambitions for a place will require strong local leadership. Elected members have a particular role in building a strong, shared vision for the area and ownership of the difficult choices that will necessarily be made in addressing future challenges.’

As leaders of place, councils will have a central responsibility for sharing and using robust local intelligence to develop an in-depth understanding of local needs so that these can be translated into local priorities. Also for ‘giving communities a strong voice enabling them to play a role in reforming services so that they genuinely respond to local peoples needs’ (*National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy, 2008*).

Councils are being required to develop new approaches to extend choice to users of services, reflect people’s aspirations and lifestyles in flexible opening hours and means of access, designing services around people’s complex and interrelated needs, and extending direct individual control, such as personal care budgets. New approaches are being introduced to reduce dependence on public services and place more power in the hands of users of service.

Meeting the challenges entails councils and their partners being clearly responsible for driving their own improvement from within, being innovative and expressing behaviours and cultures to ensure that improvement becomes self-sustaining. The nature of the long-term ambitions and the context of the economic downturn will require a shift in emphasis away from reliance on small improvements achieved by making processes more efficient towards transformational change and innovation. New relationships between councils and central government and between councils and inspectorates will demand that councils have higher levels of self-awareness and stronger mechanisms for self-assessment. Councils will also need to ensure the robustness, credibility and validity of any performance data they use. This will be especially important in high risk areas such as safeguarding.

Addressing the challenges of improving the quality of life in places sees councils increasingly working across boundaries in collaboration with other councils and partnerships. Councils will have an increased role and increased accountability in focusing on outcomes, embedding a citizen focus and contributing to the successes of local partnerships.
Effective in identifying and delivering priority services and outcomes

What's this about?

This question considers how effectively the organisation identifies its priorities at a local level based on a sound understanding of community need and how well the council currently delivers its priority services and outcomes. For London, metropolitan, unitary and county councils this question will also include considering how well the organisation sets and delivers its priorities for children’s services, adult social care and any other service specific accountabilities.

Performs adequately – what might you expect to see?

The council has a clearly stated long-term vision for the outcomes it wants to achieve for people in its communities. It has translated its vision and strategic aims into agreed and clear priorities that reflect the economic, social, cultural, historic, and political context of the place. Its vision addresses the needs of the area and all its communities, and reflects local risks and opportunities. There are examples of priorities and successful outcomes relating to tackling inequality, disadvantage and discrimination, and for addressing the complex needs of people in circumstances which make them vulnerable.

In councils with children’s and adult social care services, councillors and senior managers have a clear vision for children’s services and adult social care services.

Its priorities are based on well targeted engagement that has given it a sound understanding of the needs and aspirations of all its communities. There are examples of the council empowering communities and taking account of their views and aspirations to ensure services meet complex and long-term needs. The council is using relevant intelligence from its partners and other credible sources, where possible. Also the council is addressing changing life styles and enabling flexible choices.

The data and performance information the council relies on is relevant, of sufficient quality and well presented to decision makers.

The council is successfully delivering outcomes and services which reflect its priorities and strategic vision, while also meeting people’s complex and personal needs. The council’s services meet at least adequate standards overall.

Inspection scores for priority services will not have deteriorated. The council is maintaining or improving satisfaction levels in its priority services. Key areas of known weakness and high risk are being actively and effectively tackled.
People in circumstances which make them vulnerable and at risk are at least adequately safeguarded. The judgements from Ofsted’s and Care Quality Commission’s annual assessments show that safeguarding meets at least adequate standards. Support and intervention is given at an early stage where appropriate to help people to remain independent, retain their dignity and exercise choice and control over their needs.

**Performs well – what else might you expect to see?**

The council’s vision for the area is very ambitious. The council’s ambitions, priorities and targets are challenging and realistic. It is delivering good and improving outcomes for most of its priorities and communities. It aspires to deliver excellent performance in its priority services. Decisions are based on a robust understanding of current and future local needs and aspirations. There are many examples of the council delivering new and changing outcomes and improvements which take account of the changing national context, local circumstances, and community needs and aspirations. The council routinely engages and empowers its local people and there are many examples of the influence of local people shaping priorities, strategies and the design of services.

The council’s outcomes are clearly defined and understood by partners, with clear, robust and transparent performance information provided to partners and the community.

There are many examples of the council identifying interrelationships between services and working effectively with partners from the public, private and third sectors to deliver successful outcomes and improvement. There are examples of outcomes and services being adapted and designed in line with messages received from local service users and citizens about their needs, preferences and aspirations.

There is evidence of the council contributing effectively and actively to wider community outcomes for the area and region.

Inspectorate scores, grades and ratings are mostly good and promising or better, especially those relating to services to people in circumstances which make them vulnerable. Inspection scores will not have deteriorated for priority outcomes. Satisfaction with priority services is being maintained or improved.
Improving the services and outcomes for which it is responsible

What's this about?

This is about continually improving the services that the council has responsibility for, to achieve better outcomes for people. Councils need to continually improve their services and outcomes to meet the changing needs and expectations of their communities. In relevant councils this is also about adult social care transformation to deliver personalisation of services, enabling greater choice and control and independence for people.

Performs adequately – what you might expect to see?

The council is meeting minimum requirements for securing continuous improvement. It is generally making improvements across its priorities and responding to changing circumstances. Performance indicators show consistent levels of performance and a generally positive track record over time. There are many examples of the council working effectively on its own and with partners to improve the services and outcomes which it has prioritised.

Performs well – what else might you expect to see?

The council will have a good track record in improving its priority services and outcomes for which it is directly responsible. It is making good and sustained progress in delivering future improvements in services and outcomes. For appropriate comparisons in national and local performance indicators and performance information it is improving relatively well and/or quickly. There are many examples of the council responding quickly and effectively if things go wrong. Weaknesses, opportunities and risks are effectively identified and addressed.

The council treats citizens and people who use services as ‘active partners’ involved in identifying improvement needs and is improving services by designing flexible services that fit people’s lives and meet individual needs. Councils with responsibilities for children’s services and adult social care are, for example, actively involving children and young people, carers and adult social care service users in decisions which affect their lives, including about the design of services.

Continuous improvement is driven from within. Behaviours and cultures are in place to ensure improvement becomes self sustaining.

Inequality, deprivation, disadvantage and risks to people in circumstances which make them vulnerable are being tackled well and are reducing. It is clearly targeting improvements where they are needed most.

For councils with the responsibility for children and young people’s services and adult social care services, outcomes are improving at least in line with targets and objectives set.
Contributing to wider community outcomes

What's this about?

This should be assessed using evidence from the area assessment. There may be a link between red or green tags or flags in the area assessment and the effectiveness of the council working singly or in partnership to improve wider community aspirations and outcomes.

This is about how effectively the council is working with partners and achieving good outcomes in cross-cutting areas which link to local priorities and impact on local quality of life. It considers how effectively organisations are:

- delivering wider community outcomes based on a good understanding of community need and the local council’s sustainable communities strategy;
- contributing effectively to the local area agreement, children’s trusts, joint commissioning by councils and primary care trusts, multi area agreement and other partnership agreements; and
- delivering partnership commitments.

Performs adequately – what might you expect to see?

The council is contributing effectively to wider community outcomes including priorities expressed in local or multi-area agreements and other partnership agreements.

Its priorities are effectively aligned with those of local partners, and the vision for the wider area.

The council is respected by local partners and is regarded as contributing effectively to wider outcomes.

Performs well – what else might you expect to see?

The council has a good track record of contributing well to delivering its contributions to partnership agreements and achieving successful outcomes as a result.

The council understands well how its services interrelate to other public services and there may be many examples of shared services which are contributing to wider community outcomes effectively and efficiently.
The council is seen as performing well and effectively by partners, and it is working well with a range of partners to deliver joint outcomes which are making clear improvements to people’s lives.

The council is imaginative in gaining influence to maximise its positive impact.

**Tackling inequality and improving outcomes for people in vulnerable circumstances**

**What’s this about?**

This is about how well the organisation is reducing inequality and improving outcomes for people who are in circumstances which make them vulnerable or who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, harm, disadvantage, and/or discrimination.

**Performs adequately – what might you expect to see?**

The council is tackling inequality and disadvantage and has clear ambitions to deliver fair and equitable services and outcomes to all its communities. The council is providing access to services when needed and is meeting its equality and human rights statutory obligations. It is adequately safeguarding people in vulnerable situations and treating all people with dignity and respect. Outcomes for equality groups are of an adequate standard and are showing improving trends.

**Performs well – what else might you expect to see?**

The council understands well the complex needs and aspirations of its diverse communities. It is targeting effort and having impact where the needs and equality gaps are greatest. Outcomes for equality groups are good and showing improving trends. Inequality gaps are narrowing for priority equality groups.

People in circumstances which make them vulnerable regard the council as highly effective in listening and responding to their needs.

### 9.3 Council Key Line of Enquiry 4.2

**Does the organisation have the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvements?**

**Key line of enquiry focus**

- The organisation has the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to be effective.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

For this section we have not split what you might expect to see into the separate foci because the characteristics for leadership, capability and capacity are the same for each.

Why is it important?

Having effective leadership and the right capacity and capability are what gives an organisation the ability to deliver its priorities. Capacity is about how much can be delivered and capability is about having the right skills to deliver. *Excellence and fairness: achieving world class public services*, states: ‘excellent leadership and management are central to the quality of public services’.

The *National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy 2008* makes clear that delivering the outcomes which people want ‘requires strong leadership which is a role and responsibility for local government, led by democratically elected councillors and working with other providers of local services.’ It goes on to say that it ‘is for local government to lead the delivery of our shared joint priorities’. And that ‘Elected members have a particular role in building a strong, shared vision for the area and ownership of the difficult choices that will necessarily be made in addressing future challenges.’

The *Strong and Prosperous Communities - the Local Government White Paper 2006* and the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* informed principles set out in the *National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy 2008* including the principle that: ‘Improvement of local public services is led by councils working in partnership with local communities and other public service providers’. Elsewhere the strategy also outlines that:

- councils are leaders of place, working with their local partners to deliver better outcomes, improve the quality of life in places and provide better public services;
- capacity and skills (such as partnership working, leadership, and strategic commissioning) are needed to lead local partnerships and deliver effective efficient services that deliver shared priorities; and
- local authorities and their partners are responsible for driving their own improvement. They will lead the identification of local improvement priorities, the drive to secure continuous improvement across local public services and the achievement of ambitious local and multi area agreement outcomes.

To be successful in the context of the new performance framework councils will also need to, for example:

- equip themselves to lead their communities and take on a place shaping role;
- take the initiative;
- build their capacity for self-improvement;
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- optimise their ability to deliver community engagement and empowerment;
- be more innovative, transformational and creative;
- improve their skills for partnership working; and
- take opportunities to elicit peer challenge.

Councils have a duty to strive to achieve equality of access, equality of impact, and equality of outcomes for all. This means designing and delivering services that equally meets the needs of all the people it services. A range of different needs and circumstances need to be better understood to ensure equality of services.

Councils also have specific responsibilities relating to ensuring that children’s trusts have the capacity they need to be effective.

---

The organisation has the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to be effective

What’s this about?

This is about assessing how effective the organisation is at ensuring it has the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver its services and outcomes for the future. There are many styles of effective political and managerial leadership and what is appropriate will vary from place to place and over time.

Performs adequately – what might you expect to see?

The organisation has the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver and sustain improvement. It is responsive to changing situations and circumstances and manages change effectively. It is outcome and citizen focused. Senior officers and members are effectively leading and transforming the way the council engages with its citizens so that it is empowering them to take control and is achieving better outcomes as a result. The behaviours and culture in place support sustainable self improvement. The organisation is self-aware and sets self-improvement targets and milestones. It is honest and open about its current performance levels and the weaknesses and gaps it needs to address to achieve its objectives. Staff at different levels across the organisation understand how their contributions help to achieve improving service provisions, greater personalisation and better outcomes. The organisation has access to, and is developing effectively, the skills, tools and capacity it will need to deliver its future priorities and contributions. It has insightful and robust plans for addressing its identified gaps and weaknesses, and meeting its objectives.
The organisation provides effective leadership for the community and manages its performance adequately. There is a political will and a managerial drive from the top of the organisation, to engage with partners, local people, and all communities to help set and manage priorities. Councillors facilitate communication and participation to ensure the views of local people are heard in the decision making process.

Decision making is robust. In the way in which they work, leaders of the organisation show a real commitment to equality, community cohesion and sustainable development requirements. The organisation is showing its communities that it balances the needs of all sections of the community. Equality impact assessments are carried out effectively and positive changes are made as a result. There are examples of councillors demonstrating the willingness to tackle difficult problems and to take and stick to tough decisions to resolve these.

There are examples of the organisation building its capacity to deliver better outcomes and shared priorities through collaboration, joint work and effective partnerships, including in relation to children’s trusts and crime and disorder reduction partnerships.

**Performs well – what else might you expect to see?**

Political and managerial leadership is good. Councillors work well with officers. Leaders are well regarded by staff, the public and partners. The organisation’s leaders, the public and its partners and staff are confident that improvements will continue to be delivered in the future.

The council has a keen awareness of capacity and resource needs to deliver priorities. It regularly reviews these and makes decisions on the reallocation of resources as appropriate.

Prospects of success in delivering future improvements are promising and the council is expected to make a clear and positive impact on people’s quality of life in the longer term.

The local context and challenges in the longer term are well articulated and the organisation is shaping its delivery mechanisms and organisational architecture to reflect changing circumstances.

The organisation is delivering its priorities increasingly effectively, including through innovation, and is using its knowledge, technology and staff skills to good effect. There are many examples of the council forming strategic alliances and building sustainable partnerships to ensure it has access to the capacity it needs.

There are no capacity weaknesses or risks such as financial, staff or other resources that limit the delivery of improvement or raise concerns over any current initiatives.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

The council has an in-depth understanding about the risks, opportunities and changing context in which it is operating and what it has to do to improve. There are examples of it responding swiftly to changing circumstances when necessary.

Systematic evaluation is in place for all key projects. Partnerships are mapped, prioritised, with consistently good results being delivered.

Opportunities for improving its contribution to community leadership are well understood and pursued. The council is good at cultivating effective relationships with the community. Citizens, community representatives and organisations are well supported when they wish to make a positive contribution to improve outcomes in the area. The organisation is effectively influencing the local area agreements and other sustainable community strategies.

The council is integrating fairness and inclusion into everything it does.

Local people recognise the changes that it is making to make services more equitable. The council has focused on the needs of the user and citizen in re-designing services. The council uses the public’s views positively and is working well to manage the public’s expectations. Feedback from different communities about prospects of future improvement is good.

The organisation is acting on its knowledge of its range of diverse communities and is actively reducing risk to those communities. It anticipates changes to the demographic and social make up of its communities and includes this in long-term planning and risk management arrangements. Equality impact assessments are carried out well and good changes are due to be made as a result.

In councils with social care responsibilities, effective social care support is given at an early stage to help people to stay independent. The welfare of looked after children is given a clear focus and corporate parenting has a high visibility.

9.4 Evidence for the managing performance theme for councils

The annual assessments and ratings of performance provided by Ofsted for children’s services, and by the Care Quality Commission for adult social care services, will significantly impact on the managing performance theme judgements and the overall assessment.
We would expect to find priorities and visions articulated in the local area agreement the multiple area agreement and the sustainable community strategy (or strategies). Also in the council’s corporate plans, the local development framework and joint strategic needs assessment and other key council and partner strategies, such as those relating to crime and disorder or economic development.

The framework document contains a list of the types of evidence you can use (paragraph 100). The following list provides additional examples of potential sources of evidence for the managing performance theme:

- any self-assessment information that the council uses;
- performance assessments, ratings and service inspections from other inspectorates and regulators;
- the findings of the auditor on value for money in use of resources;
- findings of the Health and Safety Executive, the Food Standards Agency and the Environment Agency may also be relevant;
- relevant performance indicators and information, both nationally provided and locally produced;
- the council’s improvement activity and performance reports that show delivery against plans; and
- reports, findings and information from organisations such as the local government ombudsman.

This list is not exhaustive and you may draw on other sources of evidence, reflecting local circumstances, to support your judgements.

You should liaise regularly with the auditor to ensure you know what evidence he or she has. You should not ask for any evidence which has already been gathered. This will enable you to manage the links between our assessments of how the council uses its resources and how it manages its performance. See section 7.2 about links between use of resources and the managing performance theme.

Reference material and further information

The *Strong and Prosperous Communities - the Local Government White Paper 2006* sets out the government’s vision of how revitalised local authorities, working with their partners, can reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them. This White Paper also introduced the new performance framework.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

*The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy 2008* sets out central and local government's shared vision for better, more efficient, more responsive public services that ensure greater local prosperity and environmental sustainability.

*Excellence and fairness: achieving world class public services* sets out central government's overall approach to improving public services.
Section 10: Organisational assessment of fire and rescue authorities

The Audit Commission will carry out an organisational assessment of all fire and rescue services unless any exceptional circumstances apply.

The organisational assessment of fire and rescue services consists of four themes that combine the Audit Commission’s assessment of how well it delivers value for money through the use of resources with an assessment of how well it manages its performance to form an assessment of overall effectiveness. The effectiveness of operational service delivery will be assessed within the organisational assessment.

- Theme 1: managing finances;
- Theme 2: governing the business;
- Theme 3: managing resources; and
- Theme 4: managing performance.

You will liaise with the auditor (see section 7.2) to make your judgements about how effective the fire and rescue service is. You will assess effectiveness from the perspectives of how well the fire and rescue service delivers value for money, how well it delivers outcomes and services alone and with partners, and how well it is improving.

The Audit Commission’s use of resources framework and the use of resources guidance on the approach that auditors will follow are available on the Audit Commission’s website.

You should use the key lines of enquiry and characteristics set out below to make your assessment of the managing performance theme.

Because the managing performance theme is scored, the characteristics should help you ensure consistency of judgement, while still enabling you to take a flexible approach and take account of the local context and local priorities.

In your public report you will include an overall score comprised of separate scores for the use of resources theme and the managing performance theme. You will also work with relevant inspectorate colleagues and the auditor to write a clear narrative to clearly explain your judgements.
Organisational assessment score for fire and rescue services

The overall organisational assessment score is reached by combining the scores from the overall value for money in use of resources judgement and the managing performance theme:

- where the score is 1 for either assessment that will lead to the overall score being 1;
- where the score is the same for both assessments that score will become the overall score;
- where the scores are different for each of the two assessments you should use your professional judgement to reach an overall score. You should consider the national context and local circumstances to decide where to place more weight. You must refer to the table on page 30 of the CAA framework.

10.1 Fire and rescue service managing performance theme

Sector context

Throughout this section we refer to fire and rescue services because we assess the outcomes delivered by the service on behalf of their fire and rescue authority.

The CAA Fire and Rescue Service framework explains the wider context for the fire and rescue service organisational assessment. This guidance sets out how the CAA framework and the key lines of enquiry focus areas may be used in assessing fire and rescue service performance.

The Audit Commission is responsible for providing explicit assurance that the 46 fire and rescue services in England meet the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11 when providing services to local people and businesses.

The assessment will cover the specific areas of assurance that are required by the fire and rescue service national framework 2008-11. Assessment of progress with the fire and rescue service national framework 2008-11 will be carried out on a three year cycle.
The table below shows which elements of the fire and rescue service national framework 2008-11 we will assess and when.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements of the fire and rescue service national framework 2008-11</th>
<th>Page number in the National Framework</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 year Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory reform order management strategy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk information</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency in an emergency</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic incident recording</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Resilience Forums</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce development</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and development, and safety</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress with equality and diversity strategy</td>
<td>28-29</td>
<td>Annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional control centres</td>
<td>23 – 24</td>
<td>2 or 3 in line with migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firelink radio systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional management boards</td>
<td>34-35</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset management</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You will assess all 46 fire and rescue services through the organisational assessment. Fifteen services (including the Isle of Wight and the Isles of Scilly) are provided by county councils. The remaining 31 are provided by separate statutory bodies, comprising 24 combined fire and rescue services, six metropolitan fire and rescue services and the London Fire Brigade.

You must ensure that evidence gathered on the effectiveness of the fire and rescue service is used appropriately and consistently with the organisational assessments of councils. Many county fire and rescue services and some combined fire authorities share support services and functions with a host council and any assessment of the effectiveness of these must be consistent with that of the council.

Each fire and rescue service is accountable to a Fire and Rescue Authority of locally elected councillors. These are members of the fire authority. Elected members have particular roles in building a strong vision for their area, making choices about competing priorities, giving leadership and direction to the organisation, and providing challenge and review. This is particularly important in partnership activity, with other services, within the local area agreement or otherwise. You should apply the managing performance and overall organisational assessment methodology in a way which reflects the context and circumstances of the fire and rescue service. For example, the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service have a very different set of local challenges and context to London Fire Brigade.

This section of the guidance will help you assess how well each fire and rescue service is managing its performance.
Scoring the managing performance theme

The principles for scoring and reporting organisational assessments of fire and rescue services are the same as those for councils. You will combine your managing performance assessment of the fire and rescue service with the Audit Commission’s value for money in use of resources assessment. Together these assessments comprise the fire and rescue service’s organisational assessment.

For the two key lines of enquiry we have said why the question is important to the organisational assessment, and in particular the managing performance theme.

For the focus we have used the following headings in a flexible way:

- What’s this about?
- Performs adequately – what might you expect to see?
- Performs well - what else might you expect to see?

We have used characteristics to describe what you might expect to see where a fire and rescue services performs adequately, level 2, and performs well, level 3.

Performs adequately includes the characteristics of performance for level 2 and performs well includes the additional characteristics of performance for level 3. If any of the characteristics outlined in level 2 are not evident, you should consider giving a level 1 score. If the characteristics outlined in level 3 are clearly evident, and the fire and rescue service also clearly exceeds this level, you should consider giving a score of 4.

These characteristics of performance are integrated into the guidance, rather than presented separately. This is to reinforce the message that they are not a list of criteria or a checklist to be complied with to achieve a certain score. Fire and rescue services can become excellent in many different ways. The characteristics are therefore not intended to be prescriptive but are provided to help you reach an overall rounded judgement for the theme. Providing characteristics also makes the assessment transparent and will help you ensure our judgements are consistent, while still reflective of local circumstances.

You are not expected to score each focus bullet point, sub-heading or key line of enquiry. You might see other characteristics that enable the fire and rescue service to demonstrate it is performing at a particular level and these may be equally as valid as those included in the guidance.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

You should score the managing performance theme for fire and rescue services using a scale of 1 to 4. The descriptors of performance are as follows:

- a score of 1: performs poorly: does not meet minimum requirements
- a score of 2: performs adequately: meets only minimum requirements
- a score of 3: performs well: exceeds minimum requirements
- a score of 4: performs excellently: significantly exceeds minimum requirements

You should use the two questions that form the key lines of enquiry and the characteristics for the managing performance theme in a flexible way to help you arrive at a rounded professional judgement about how effective the fire and rescue service is.

The two questions are complementary and you should consider them together. However in reaching your final judgement you should weight the questions based on how national priorities and local circumstances impact locally. For example there may be some single issues that are of such significance that they weigh more heavily in reaching your conclusion, for example services to people who are in vulnerable circumstances.

For each key line of enquiry we have said why the question is important to the organisational assessment, and in particular the managing performance theme. These characteristics of performance are integrated into the guidance, and are to be referred to in the same way as for the guidance for councils. This is to reinforce the message that they are not a list of criteria or a checklist to be complied with to achieve a certain score.

Sources of evidence

The evidence you will use for the organisational assessment will also inform the area assessment. You need to apply the COUNT principle. This means you will access or collect evidence once and use it numerous times. This is how we will avoid duplicating requests for evidence, and ensure you efficiently and effectively manage the linkages between the area assessments and the organisational assessments.

The guidance includes examples of some sources of evidence that might be available and which may be relevant for your assessment. The list is not exhaustive and is not intended to be prescriptive about the documents or sources you can use. You should draw on any sources of evidence, relevant to the national context and local circumstances that might help you answer the questions. You will need to apply risk based proportionality in deciding what, and in what depth, you review the specific issues.
Your evidence should relate to three time zones to help you reach a rounded judgement:

- delivery of priorities and outcomes over the last year;
- current outcomes; and
- future prospects of improvement.

10.2 Fire and rescue service Key Line of Enquiry 4.1

How well is the organisation delivering its priority services, outcomes and improvements that are important to local people?

Key line of enquiry focus

This key line of enquiry focuses on service improvement and operational effectiveness. You will take into account how well the fire and rescue service balances its prevention, protection and response functions.

You will assess whether the fire and rescue service is effective in identifying and delivering priority services and outcomes and that this is underpinned by the integrated risk management plan (IRMP). We will focus on how well the fire and rescue service improves the services and outcomes for which it is responsible and how it:

- delivers the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11;
- is operationally effective, demonstrating operational preparedness and ability to deliver an emergency response where both public and firefighter safety are paramount; and
- delivers its obligations and contributions to make the area resilient and able to deal with larger scale emergencies.

In assessing how well the fire and rescue service contributes to wider community outcomes, our focus will be on how well the service:

- delivers wider community outcomes based on well targeted engagement that has given it a sound understanding of the needs of all its communities;
- demonstrates measurable impact from its fire prevention and community protection activities;
- contributes to local area agreement priorities through effective partnership working; and
Our organisational assessment will take into account how effective the fire and rescue service is in tackling inequalities and improving outcomes for people in the most vulnerable circumstances.

Why is this important?

As well as responding to fires, road traffic collisions, flooding and major incidents the fire and rescue service also responds to incidents such as freeing people who have become trapped in buildings and machinery. Fire and rescue services increasingly work with public and voluntary sector partners to reduce the risk of fire and improve community safety in local neighbourhoods. Fire and rescue services are also partner authorities in local area agreements and have a much wider role in the community safety agenda. They play a key role in crime and disorder reduction partnerships and local resilience forums.

The Audit Commission national report *Rising to the challenge - improving fire and rescue service efficiency 2008* indicates that fire and rescue services have contributed to a declining risk of fire. Fire and rescue services and their partners have significantly increased their community fire safety activity, but evaluation of initiatives and partnerships is varied. The report highlights that more could be done in effective collaboration both between services and with other organisations. There remains considerable potential for further efficiency savings with much to be learnt from following the best performers. This is increasingly important to local people who expect that their fire and rescue service delivers a high quality service as well as value for money.

The *Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004* gives the legal basis for the creation of a Fire and Rescue Service National Framework which sets out the Government’s expectations for fire and rescue authorities and what is required to meet those expectations.

The Audit Commission is responsible for providing explicit assurance that the 46 fire and rescue services in England meet the requirements of the fire and rescue service national framework and of the fire and rescue service equality and diversity strategy. The fire and rescue service national framework sets out the government’s priorities and objectives for the fire and rescue service. It does this by making clear:

- The government’s expectations for the fire and rescue service;
- What fire and rescue authorities are expected to do; and
- The support the government will provide in helping them to meet these objectives.
Addressing the challenges of improving the quality of life in places involves fire and rescue services increasingly working across boundaries in collaboration with a range of partners. Fire and rescue services have a role and increased accountability in focusing on outcomes and embedding a citizen focus while contributing to the successes of local partnerships.

**Effective in identifying and delivering priority services and outcomes**

**What’s this about?**

You will consider how effectively the organisation identifies and is delivering its priorities at a local level based on a sound understanding of community need; and nationally against the public service agreement targets for the fire and rescue service.

Fire and rescue services have evaluated risk to communities including risk to life, the economy, heritage and the environment. This includes using their resources flexibly in prevention, protection and response measures to deliver better outcomes for communities. You will need to be assured that the integrated risk management plan has been developed with input from stakeholders, is being operated effectively and that the service is delivering the identified priorities and service outcomes. The integrated risk management plan needs to be based on up to date community risk data.

Fire and rescue services should communicate their priorities to people locally. In addition to the local area agreement, we would expect to find priorities well linked to the local strategic partnership’s sustainable community strategy and the local crime and disorder reduction partnership.

**Performs adequately - what might you expect to see?**

The fire and rescue service has a clearly stated vision for what it wants to achieve to make people safer in its communities. It has translated its vision and strategic aims into clear priorities that reflect the economic, social, cultural, historic, and political context of the place and take into account the fire and rescue service national framework. The integrated risk management plan is a fundamental part of this process.

Its vision addresses the needs of the area and all its communities, and reflects local risks and opportunities. Priorities will be set for ensuring the equality of service provision and in tackling disadvantage and discrimination, and for addressing the complex needs of people in circumstances which make them vulnerable.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Priorities are appropriate to the local context and are based on well targeted engagement that has given it a sound understanding of all its communities’ needs and aspirations. The fire and rescue service will have examples of empowering communities to ensure services and long-term objectives and well-being are built to meet complex and long-term needs, views and aspirations, and to address changing life styles and flexible choices. Priorities are communicated effectively and understood by the local community, partners and staff. There is a shared commitment to achievement of the priorities and examples of success and positive prospects of future success.

The fire and rescue service will be successfully delivering outcomes and services which reflect its priorities and strategic vision, and make the community safer while also meeting peoples’ personal needs. People in circumstances which make them vulnerable and at risk will be at least adequately safeguarded.

The fire and rescue service will be maintaining good satisfaction levels in its priority services. All key areas of known weakness and high risk are being actively and effectively addressed. The data and performance information the fire and rescue service relies on is relevant, accurate and well presented to decision makers.

**Performs well – what else might you expect to see?**

The fire and rescue service is delivering and improving outcomes for most of its priorities and communities. It is meeting high performance standards in all its priority services and is clearly making the community safer. Decisions are transparent and linked to the integrated risk management plan. There will be many examples of the fire and rescue service delivering better outcomes and improvements which take community needs and aspirations into account. Priorities and targets will be challenging and realistic, underpinned by effective business planning.

The fire and rescue service engages well with its local people and there will be many examples of the influence of local people shaping priorities, strategies and the design of services. Its outcomes will be clearly defined and understood by partners, with clear and transparent performance information provided to partners and the community.

There will be many examples of the fire and rescue service identifying inter relationships between services and working effectively with partners from the public, private and third sectors to deliver successful outcomes and improvement. There will be examples of outcomes and services being adapted and designed in line with messages received from local service users and citizens about their needs, preferences and aspirations.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

The fire and rescue service uses up to date and effective analysis to ensure that services are being provided equitably and fairly to all communities, including those in isolated locations. Satisfaction with priority services will be being maintained and actively improved. Partners speak highly of the fire and rescue service and recognise what it is achieving.

---

**Improving the services and outcomes for which it is responsible**

**What’s this about?**

This is about assessing that the fire and rescue service:

- continually improves services and outcomes it is responsible for;
- delivers the requirements of the fire and rescue service national framework 2008-11;
- is operationally effective demonstrating operational preparedness and ability to deliver an emergency response where both public and firefighter safety are paramount; and
- delivers its obligations and contributions to make the area resilient and able to deal with larger scale emergencies.

Resilience for fire and rescue services means being able to deal with larger scale civil emergencies such as flooding, extreme weather, terrorism, and civil disorder. Organisations should be making sure that they and their partners have the right systems and processes in place to continue service delivery in an emergency.

**Performs adequately - what might you expect to see?**

The fire and rescue service is meeting minimum requirements for securing continuous improvement. It is generally making improvements across its priorities. Performance indicators show consistent levels of performance and a generally positive track record over time. There are many examples of the fire and rescue service working effectively alone and with partners to improve the services and outcomes in priority areas.

The fire and rescue service takes an effective approach to preventing fires and other emergencies. Fires, deaths and injuries from fire are reducing. Community safety work such as reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured due to road traffic collisions is being effectively delivered with in partnership. The fire and rescue service responds to emergencies, meets its identified attendance standards and delivers the requirements of the fire and rescue service national framework. Clear progress is being made. See the table in section 10.1 for details of when you will be assessing specific elements of the fire and rescue service national framework.

CAA Guidance v1-1 90 of 171
It is delivering its obligations and contributions to making the area more resilient to deal with larger scale emergencies and ensuring the requirements and civil protection duties of the *Civil Contingencies Act 2004* are effectively being delivered in partnership. The organisation is helping other agencies and individuals to comply with the regulatory reform order. The fire and rescue service is encouraging owners and occupiers of buildings to take more responsibility for fire safety.

**Performs well – what else might you expect to see?**

The fire and rescue service has a consistent track record in improving its priority services and outcomes for which it is directly responsible. It is making good and sustained progress in delivering future improvements in services and outcomes.

For appropriate comparisons in national and local performance indicators and performance information it is improving relatively well and quickly.

There are many examples of the fire and rescue service responding quickly and effectively when performance targets have not been met. Weaknesses, opportunities and risks are effectively identified and addressed. The fire and rescue service understands what needs to be improved and behaviours and cultures are in place to ensure that improvement becomes self sustaining.

The fire and rescue service will be able to show how improvements delivered on its own or in partnership are helping all its diverse communities and people in vulnerable circumstances. It will be clearly targeting improvements in the areas that need it most.

The fire and rescue service responds to emergencies and consistently meets its identified attendance standards. Response standards are regularly reviewed for adequacy and appropriateness. The requirements of the fire and rescue service national framework are being delivered and good progress is being made. For example, in demonstrating improving outcomes resulting from the integrated risk management plan.

It is delivering its obligations and contributions to making the area more resilient to deal with larger scale emergencies and ensuring the civil protection duties and requirements of the *Civil Contingencies Act 2004* are being delivered. The fire and rescue service can demonstrate outcomes from helping people comply with the regulatory reform order. The fire and rescue service encourages owners and occupies to take more responsibility for fire safety. Businesses have good access to support and information.
Contributing to wider community outcomes

What’s this about?

This is about how effectively the fire and rescue service is working with partners and achieving wider community outcomes which link to local priorities and impact on local quality of life. It considers how effectively the fire and rescue service:

- delivers wider community outcomes based on well targeted engagement that has given it a sound understanding of the needs of all its communities;
- demonstrates measurable impact from its fire prevention and community protection activities;
- contributes to local area agreement priorities through effective partnership working; and
- contributes to local priorities and national indicators that may be outside the local area agreement.

Performs adequately – what might you expect to see?

The fire and rescue service contributes to wider community outcomes through shared priorities expressed in the local area agreement and other shared agreements. It will be contributing to local priorities and national indicators that may be outside local area agreements. Priorities are effectively aligned with those of local partners and the vision for the wider area. There is evidence of revising service priorities to meet a wider community outcome.

Partners recognise and clearly understand how fire and rescue services contribute to wider sustainable community outcomes as well as to making places safe. The fire and rescue service can demonstrate its involvement and impact in delivering the priorities of community safety partnerships, local resilience forums and local area agreements. It can show how it contributes to reductions in deaths, injuries, road traffic collisions, supports young people and other locally important issues. It is targeting its services in areas of greatest need and effectively evaluates its contribution to partnerships.

Performs well – what else might you expect to see?

The fire and rescue service has a good track record of contributing and delivering its contributions to partnership agreements. It understands well how its services interrelate to other public services and there are many examples of shared services which are contributing to wider community outcomes effectively and efficiently. It is achieving all its agreed targets for partnership working.
The fire and rescue service is seen as performing well by partners, and is imaginative in gaining influence to maximise its positive impact. It works effectively with a range of partners in a consistent and well co-ordinated way to make the area safer and improve people’s lives. Partnerships have been mapped, prioritised and focused on what matters most to local communities. Evaluation is effective in identifying partnership performance and the fire and rescue service takes decisions based upon this information.

It is directly contributing to the achievements of partnerships such as through the crime and disorder reduction partnership and the local strategic partnership’s sustainable community strategies. It is actively improving community safety and reducing anti-social behaviour through effectively targeted campaigns and education projects. It is working with other organisations regionally and across borders to help prevent fires and other emergencies.

The organisation is actively reducing its impact on the environment and delivering services in a more sustainable way.

---

**Tackling inequality and improving outcomes for people in vulnerable circumstances**

**What’s this about?**

This is about how well the organisation is reducing inequality and improving outcomes for people who are in circumstances which make them vulnerable. It particularly considers what is being done to target engagement and improve outcomes for all communities.

For fire and rescue authorities this means delivering services equitably and making sure that people are not disadvantaged by living in different circumstances.

The *Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018* sets ambitious delivery targets that will be challenging. Continuous progression in this area will require a high level of commitment to be set and maintained at all levels of the fire and rescue service.

**Performs adequately – what might you expect to see?**

The fire and rescue service is tackling inequality and disadvantage and has clear ambitions to deliver fair and equitable services and outcomes to all its communities. Outcomes for communities are adequate and are showing improving trends.

It is making good progress in delivering its responsibilities and meeting its milestones and targets in line with the fire and rescue service equality and diversity strategy.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Clear leadership from senior managers and members together with sound recruitment and retention practices is making the service more representative of the communities it serves.

**Performs well – what else might you expect to see?**

The fire and rescue service has a good understanding of the complex needs and aspirations of all its communities. It is targeting effort and having impact where the needs and gaps are greatest. Outcomes for equality groups are good and showing improving trends.

People in circumstances which make them vulnerable regard the fire and rescue service as highly effective in listening and responding to their needs.

The organisation is on track to meet the targets in line with the *Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018*.

Senior managers and fire authority members are providing strong leadership in tackling inequality. Recruitment, retention and progression rates of women, disabled employees and minority ethnic staff are good.

### 10.3 Fire and rescue service Key Line of Enquiry 4.2

**Does the organisation have the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvements?**

**Key line of enquiry focus**

The fire and rescue service has the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to be effective and:

- has a positive and consistent track record in managing change and delivering improvements over time;
- has the political will and managerial drive to engage with partners, local people, and all communities to help set and deliver priorities;
- has the leadership, capacity and capability to deliver and sustain improvement and is agile enough to manage change effectively;
- has the capacity to deliver its future priorities ensuring that staff work safely and effectively;
- takes equality and diversity seriously, is delivering its responsibilities and is on track to meet its targets in line with the *Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018*; and
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- is influencing and delivering effectively its contribution to the regional management board, crime and disorder reduction partnerships, and the local area agreement.

For this section we have not split what you might expect to see into the separate foci because the characteristics for leadership, capability and capacity are the same for each.

Why is this important?

Fire and rescue services need to have the vision and commitment to improve and deliver safer communities working as an individual service and as an effective partner. Fire and rescue authorities have a key leadership role in ensuring that the service has the leadership, capacity and capability to deliver future improvement.

Having effective leadership and the right capacity and capability are what gives an organisation the ability to deliver its priorities. Capacity is about how much can be delivered and capability is about having the right skills to deliver.

How the fire and rescue service is leading and managing organisational change and building the capacity and appetite for change at all levels of the service is critical to ensuring that it secures good prospects for improvement. Effective managerial and political leadership, and involving partners and the workforce in the whole process of organisational change increases ownership, commitment and success.

In the fire and rescue service, capability means having the operational and managerial competence to deliver services effectively. Incident command competency means something more specific than leadership, and relates to national standards such as fire and rescue service role maps and being able to deal with operational incidents effectively. Fire and rescue services with staff working the retained duty system face particular challenges in maintaining capacity and competence of retained duty system staff.

The Audit Commission national report *Rising to the challenge - improving fire and rescue service efficiency 2008* states that fire and rescue services can do more to equip themselves to meet new challenges. Services already support one another across borders but they could save more money by sharing good practice and collaborating on training, procurement and other back office services to build capacity and capability. The best performers take difficult decisions so that improvements and efficiencies are made.

To deliver fire and community safety roles well, fire and rescue services need to reflect the communities they serve. Fire and rescue services are committed to improving diversity in the workforce, and some have recruited more women and people from ethnic minorities.
The fire and rescue service has a vital role to play in providing the national resilience capability against the largest risks such as terrorist attacks, chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) incidents or major disasters including flooding. Resilience issues are also considered here as a capacity issue that may affect prospects for improvement.

Partnership working is one way that fire and rescue services can maximise their capacity to deliver improvements. Public sector organisations have a duty to cooperate together to agree targets and deliver improved outcomes. Good partnership working leads to coordinated planning and delivery with better outcomes for people and communities and greater efficiencies for the partners.

Regional management boards were established to improve fire and rescue service cooperation and collaboration in areas such as procurement, training, and sharing best practice. *Rising to the challenge* identifies the importance of clear objectives for regional management board activity to improve effectiveness and efficiency through working with neighbouring services. You will assess individual fire and rescue services’ contributions to regional management boards. Assessment of regional management boards will be timed in accordance with their review under the *Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11* – see Table in section 10.1.

What’s this about?

This is about assessing how effective the organisation is at ensuring it has the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver and sustain improvement and is agile enough to manage change effectively.

The fire and rescue service has the political will and managerial drive to engage with partners, local people, and all communities to set and deliver priorities. There are many styles of effective political and managerial leadership and what is appropriate will vary from place to place and over time. Improvement must also be appropriate for the size and context that the organisation works in.
Perform adequately – what might you expect to see?

The organisation has the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver and sustain improvement. It is agile enough to manage change effectively.

The fire and rescue service has the right people with right skills, training and systems and processes to support this. The fire and rescue service has clearly defined policies that take account of its legislative health, safety and welfare responsibilities. Suitable and sufficient risk assessment is carried out for activities. Staff training and development programmes are in place, and effective for all staff in the service. The organisation is committed to developing a positive health and safety culture. As a result there are positive signs of fewer accidents, less sickness absence, and safer systems of work. Retained duty system staff are well supported.

The organisation is self-aware. It is honest and open about its current performance levels and the weaknesses and gaps it needs to address to achieve its objectives.

The organisation provides effective and appropriate leadership for the community and manages its performance adequately. There is a political will and a managerial drive from the top of the organisation to engage with partners, local people, and all communities to help set and manage priorities. Members facilitate dialogue and participation to ensure the views of local people are heard in the decision making process.

Leaders of the organisation demonstrate a real commitment to equality, community cohesion and sustainable development requirements. Their behaviour supports this. The organisation is showing its communities that it balances the needs of all sections of the community. Equality impact assessments are carried out effectively and positive improvements to services are made as a result.

There are examples of elected members demonstrating the willingness to tackle difficult problems and to take and stick to tough decisions to resolve these.

The fire and rescue service has a track record of delivering its plans for improvement. It has completed the improvement plan from the 2006 operational assessment of service delivery and has a current improvement plan in place based on a robust and recent assessment of operational service delivery.

The organisation is increasing its capacity to deliver better outcomes through collaboration and joint work to deliver shared priorities. The fire and rescue service is identifying areas of concern and has robust plans in place to improve the situation. These plans are being delivered.
The fire and rescue service is effectively influencing and delivering its contribution to the regional management board, collaborative partnerships, crime and disorder reduction partnerships and local area agreements. The impact of fire and rescue services work within regional management boards is increasing.

**Performs well – what else might you expect to see?**

Political and managerial leadership is good. Members work well with officers. Leaders are well regarded by staff, the public and partners. The fire and rescue service, the public and its partners and staff are confident that improvements will continue to be delivered in the future.

The fire and rescue service has a keen awareness of capacity and resource needs to deliver priorities. It regularly reviews these and makes decisions on reallocation of resources and opportunities to improve its services. For example the recommendations in *Rising to the challenge* have been actively assessed and contextualised for application by the fire and rescue service.

Prospects of success in delivering future improvements are promising and the fire and rescue service is expected to make a clear and positive impact on people’s quality of life, including making the area safer, in the longer term. The local context and challenges in the longer term are well articulated and the organisation is shaping its delivery mechanisms and organisational architecture to reflect changing circumstances. The fire and rescue service is delivering its priorities innovatively and is using its knowledge, technology and staff skills to good effect.

There are no capacity weaknesses or risks such as financial or with other resources that limit the delivery of improvement or raise questions over any current initiatives.

The fire and rescue service challenges its performance to deliver services in more innovative ways and to be more effective and efficient so that better outcomes will be secured in the future. Engagement with partners and the public is good. Internal and external challenge is welcomed and changes are made as a result. The organisation has the leadership, skills, capacity and capability to sustain improvement in the future.

The fire and rescue service is resilient and capable of dealing with large scale civil protection issues in the future. Resilience arrangements are tested with partners and improvements made as a result. Fire prevention and protection is improving community resilience. As a result the community recovers quicker from large scale emergencies. This includes the business community.

The fire and rescue service has the right people with the right skills, training and systems to sustain improvement. It takes the appropriate action at a strategic level to actively reduce risks to staff and the public. The positive health and safety culture is delivering progressively fewer accidents, less sickness absence, and safer systems of work.
Effective risk assessment results in staff working safely and effectively. The organisation effectively involves staff and their representatives in health and safety issues. As a result, staff are competent and confident enough to be able to deliver services now and in the future.

The organisation has a good track record of increasing its capacity and delivering better outcomes through collaboration and joint work to deliver shared priorities. The potential for shared services is well understood and acted upon. For example shared services for support functions are actively pursued.

Partnership working is developing well with a more focused management of partnerships in place. Systematic and effective evaluation is in place for all key projects. Partnerships are mapped and prioritised. Consistently good results are being delivered. A vision is in place for future partnership development, including strategies for change.

The fire and rescue service uses the public’s views positively and is working well to manage the public’s expectations. Feedback from different communities about prospects of future improvement is good.

The organisation is acting on its knowledge of its range of diverse communities and is actively reducing risk to those communities. It anticipates changes to the demographic and social make up of its communities and includes this in long term planning and risk management arrangements. Equality impact assessments are undertaken proactively as a matter of course and provide the service with effective responses.

10.4 Evidence for the managing performance theme for the fire and rescue service

The Audit Commission is making assessments of operational issues for the first time in 2009. In doing so we will refer to other assessments being carried out in the sector. We will draw on a range of evidence including the sector led operational assessment.

The operational assessment has been developed by the Office of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (OCFRA) along with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). It focuses on the operational aspects of delivering of fire and rescue services. This assessment will help us to assess health and safety, staff development, and operational preparedness.

The CAA Fire and Rescue Service framework states:
'The sector led operational assessment will provide an important evidence source for both the area and organisational assessments. Where we have evidence from the operational assessment we will rely on it, subject to an evidence based ‘reality check’, where this is deemed necessary. Where an operational assessment has not been carried out we will use our managing performance assessment to conduct a sufficiently comprehensive assessment to meet the Audit Commission’s public assurance responsibilities.'

For the purpose of our assessments, a peer review carried out by the IDeA using accredited peers constitutes an ‘evidence based reality check’. The operational assessment peer review will result in a report to the fire and rescue service from the IDeA. The operational assessment report will be an important evidence source for you to take into account. If an operational assessment peer review has not been carried out and delivered by the end of July 2009 we will assess progress since the last operational assessment of service delivery (OASD) in 2006. Fire and rescue service officer peers will help us do this. We will not be validating any operational assessment self-assessment. Peers will focus on key operational issues and assist in making an assessment on the ability of the fire and rescue service to deal with larger scale civil protection issues. These have implications for the area assessment in judging how safe the area is and prospects for improvement.

Other sources of evidence may also be considered. For example, service inspections of councils or fire and rescue services, inspections carried out by the Health and Safety Executive, and any self-assessment work on civil contingencies.

We would expect to find priorities and actions articulated in the local area agreement, the multi area agreement, the crime and disorder reduction partnership strategy and the sustainable community strategy. You will also refer to the fire and rescue service’s corporate plans and the integrated risk management plan.

You may be able to draw on the following sources of information to help judge how well the organisation manages its performance:

- any self-evaluation information that the fire and rescue service uses;
- improvement plans with the operational assessment of service delivery from 2006 and then with the new operational assessment;
- performance assessments from other inspectorates and regulators. For example, findings of the Health and Safety Executive, reviews of crime and disorder reduction partnerships;
- the findings of the appointed auditor on value for money in use of resources;
- relevant performance indicators and information, both nationally provided and locally produced; and
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- the fire and rescue service’s improvement activity and performance reports that show delivery against plans.

Fire and rescue service reference material

View the Audit Commission report *Rising to the challenge - improving fire and rescue service efficiency 2008*

View the Audit Commission, *fire and rescue performance assessment for 2008*

View the Audit Commission report, *Tired of hanging around - Using sport and leisure activities to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people*

View the Communities and Local Government *Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11*

View the Communities and Local Government *Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018*

National Audit Office, *New Dimension - Enhancing the Fire and Rescue Services’ capacity to respond to terrorist and other large scale incidents 2008*

View the *Civil Contingencies Act 2004 – Expectations and indicators of good practice* published by the cabinet office.
Section 11: Reporting and reports

11.1 Purpose of CAA reporting

The aim of CAA reporting is to support improvement in local services, provide accountability to local people and government and help ensure better access to information about local areas to encourage stronger civic participation. Formal reporting of CAA will take two principal forms:

- annual public reporting; and
- regular feedback to local organisations and local partners or their representatives.

The key audience for your annual reports will be the public, including citizens, service users, active citizens, and voluntary and community groups. The other key audiences will include local partners, public services and third sector bodies, government departments, members of parliament, government offices in the regions, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and improvement agencies.

The elements of CAA that we will be publicly reporting are:

- area assessments;
- organisational assessments;
- the National Indicator Set; and
- relevant improvement activity and inspection plans.

The CAA Lead will engage regularly with local partnerships and organisations as you produce your assessments. You should also share, at least quarterly, a current statement of your emerging assessment findings and judgements. For the area assessment you should provide this to the local strategic partnership or its representatives. For the organisational assessment you should provide feedback to the relevant council or fire and rescue authority. CAA Leads will play a key role in coordinating inspectorate contributions for the regular updates, and in ensuring the joint emerging picture is provided to local partners – directly, or through a member of their area team. Remember that your judgements may touch on sensitive issues, including issues covering counter terrorism and preventing violent extremism. You will need to handle these judgements sensitively.

Practical guidance on report writing (including guidance about the computer systems) and a joint-inspectorate style guide are available separately.

For reporting examples see the prototype CAA reporting website.
11.2 How you will report

CAA will be publicly reported for the first time in November 2009. Your reports will complement reporting of the National Indicator Set, and be principally web-based. Your reports will be drawn directly from text that you upload in the joint assessment system.

A [prototype CAA reporting website](#) is available. Non-web based formats will also be made available, drawn from the extracts of the web text, to reach audiences in accessible and relevant ways. We will also promote local dissemination of the result of CAA directly by local services, using established communications mechanisms.

You should report in a way that reflects local priorities and the relative importance of them. You may also want to report on important neighbourhood and regional or sub-regional issues. You should not structure your area assessment report around the themes set out in appendix 1. We will design the reporting website so that people can search for key judgements using these themes, if they wish to.

You should discuss emerging area assessment findings with local partners, and their representatives, regularly throughout the year. Similarly, you should discuss emerging organisational assessment findings with the relevant councils and fire and rescue authorities. You might wish to share your emerging findings and judgements throughout the year using a variety of means, for example, through written summary updates, oral updates at meetings, and presentations. However, reporting all our assessment findings to the public will take place in November each year.

Your reports should not be a description of each place or organisation. They must focus on local priorities, outcomes and future prospects. Reports should be concise to show the inherent proportionality of CAA. Reports should evolve over time as findings emerge and be drafted using the joint assessment system. This will allow you to regularly feed back to the partnership or relevant organisation as well as enable you to integrate quality assurance.

Record whatever you report to local partners on the joint assessment system.
Specific guidance for CAA Leads

As a CAA Lead you will have a key role in compiling and editing CAA reports, using contributions from all the inspectorates. The CAA reports you draft on behalf of all inspectorates are not traditional inspection reports and will be drawn directly from text that you upload in the joint assessment system. All reports will need to be cleared by inspectorates. You need to ensure that the reports are clearly written for members of the public, specifically for people who live and work in and visit the area. You will need to replace any jargon and technical language with plain language equivalents. For CAA reports we will not adopt the ‘judgement, evidence, impact’ reporting style used, for example, by the Audit Commission. Instead each issue reported needs to cover each of the headings below. You may want to provide one or two examples of evidence to support your judgements, including examples of what is being done to address a serious concern to provide assurance where relevant. But you do not need to go into detail about the evidence in any summary sections. Information about the evidence you are using can be provided to local partner representatives through your regular engagement instead. While we want to make sure that the approach to writing consistently covers the relevant issues, you can vary and adapt the order in which you cover the points to help you tell a coherent story. It is also important that the reports you write are neither formulaic nor repetitive.

11.3 Area assessment reports

Your area assessment reports are for the public and so you should write them in plain English. Ensure your reports are simple to understand, short and to the point. Use active language, avoid jargon and focus on what’s important to local people and the priorities for their area.

Your area assessment reports must make clear the prospects for improvement to priority outcomes in the future. Do not comment on everything, everywhere and don’t write a long description about the place and what’s happening. Instead report issues of importance, by exception. To help you determine what makes an exception, we have set out what you should consider below.
Use your reports to comment on significant issues, including in some instances where these are outside of locally agreed priorities, particularly if the issues are important to local people. Where targets are insufficiently challenging or lack sufficient ambition, you should raise this in the report.

For 2009, the area assessment should reflect the action taken locally to mitigate the effects of the current economic downturn, taking into account any impact on local priorities.

Some issues are important everywhere, such as outcomes for children and young people, and for people whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and social care outcomes for adults. Other issues account for a significant amount of public expenditure and so may be of interest for that reason. For outcomes for children and young people, you will need to report the judgements using the five Every Child Matters themes. Ofsted inspectors will provide text and guidance for this. If it is appropriate to local outcomes to report on adult social care outcomes, Care Quality Commission representatives will provide draft text.

Area assessment reports should be structured under agreed local priorities, and consist of:

- **a short summary of the assessment**: in this section you should highlight the key findings of the assessment in a short, punchy and straightforward way. Structure the summary under headings which relate to the area’s key local priorities.
• **context and local partnership arrangements**: for this section write a short contextual paragraph that outlines the nature of the area, but do not include information on performance information. In a further paragraph explain the nature of the partnership and list the local priorities.

• **issues relating to how well priorities express community needs and aspirations**: you can use this section to cover any issues relating to question 1 of the area assessment, where they will affect outcomes. For example, you would use this section if you wish to report on key judgements about local partners’ understanding of their local context and communities, whether the agreed local priorities reflect community needs and aspirations, whether targets overall are realistic and stretching, whether partners are effectively implementing the duty to involve, whether partners fully understand the needs of vulnerable groups, and the effectiveness of partnership arrangements. Any issues you report in this section should relate to your main judgements about future prospects for outcomes, so you might highlight, for example, where a particular significant concern is not being addressed but there is strong evidence that it needs to be. This needs to be handled sensitively to avoid challenging legitimate political decision making.

• **themed narrative about outcomes and future prospects**: structure your judgements, and the context for your judgements, under headings which relate to each of the area’s local priorities. Clearly focus this section on reporting your judgements about the prospects for future outcomes and improvement. You should outline any information about current performance or recent performance trends to provide a context for your judgements about future prospects. You should also outline any specific action being taken to address known concerns, risks or improvement targets. Where accountabilities relate to a specific organisation or partnership, you should state this explicitly. Where issues relate to a specific community, group or place, for example, a town or neighbourhood emphasise this.

The themed narrative about outcomes and future prospects should be made up of two types of narrative:

• **flags**: your narrative to support the red flag should make the issues, outcomes, future prospects and barriers to improvement explicit. Red flags are a scored judgement and subject to review and challenge. Your narrative for a green flag should make clear what you think others can learn from the successes or promising innovation. Flag text must contain significantly more detail than other issues reported in the area assessment. The criterion for flags is set out in section 5.1.

• **important priorities and outcomes**: these should be reported by exception only and reflect outcomes that are important to the area, local partnerships and, most importantly, local people.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

For each key issue you report on, you should cover:

- **outcome** - an outline of the outcome;
- **aims** - a brief section on levels of ambition, whether this is a priority for the area, whether targets have been set and levels of achievement to date (to give some context to the judgement);
- **prospects for improvement** - the main section of the flag/narrative on our judgement of the future prospects and why we have made it. This should include information on accountable organisations;
- **successes** – in green flag examples outline the achievements, successes or innovation that others can learn from, and the impact experienced or expected; and
- **barriers** - in red flag examples include a section to outline the barriers to improvement, clarify what the local partners and organisations need to address to improve the prospects of success, and a link to information on improvement activity under-way to address the issue you have flagged.

Examples of area assessment report are available on the [prototype CAA reporting website](#).

### 11.4 Organisational assessment reports

The organisational assessment report is for the public and so you should write them in plain English. Ensure your reports are simple to understand, short and to the point. Use active language and avoid jargon. The organisational assessment should focus on the priorities of the organisation, its contribution to area-wide outcomes and integrate both managing performance and use of resources themes. CAA Leads will need to liaise with auditors, as well as partner inspectorates, when writing the organisational assessment reports. Organisational assessments are scored and may be subject to challenge.

Your organisational assessment report should consist of:

- **a summary**: write a short section outlining your key findings and judgements. Ensure it is short and aimed at the public. Use plain English, active language and focus on the issues which are most important locally. You must include short summary statements covering judgements about the performance of children’s services and adult social care for all London, metropolitan, unitary and county councils. The fuller report must also pay due regard to these important service areas.
• **context and priorities**: write a short contextual paragraph to outline the social-demographic nature of the area. Do not include performance information. In a further paragraph explain the nature of the organisation, and list its key priorities.

• **organisational effectiveness**: structure the main part of your report under local priorities wherever possible and provide a narrative about the organisation’s effectiveness in delivering these priorities. Integrate your judgements of the managing performance and use of resources themes. Where flags (red or green) or other issues in the area assessment relate to the performance, responsibilities or accountabilities of a council or fire and rescue authority, you should expand on these issues in the organisational assessment. Specify the organisation’s contribution. A narrative and rating of children’s services and adult social care must be included in all organisational assessments for London, metropolitan, unitary and county councils. Ofsted and Care Quality Commission will provide the rating and any draft text for this.

Examples of the organisational assessment report are available on the [prototype CAA reporting website](#).

### 11.5 National Indicator Set

The Audit Commission will publish on behalf of the government the national indicators for 2008/09, as part of the performance assessment framework for local government.

Reporting will show individual results for each relevant area along with national averages and a range of comparator groups, for example, statistical and geographic neighbours. This information will be available on the CAA reporting website.
Section 12: Evidence and performance frameworks

12.1 Evidence

The range of evidence that could inform CAA is potentially very wide. You should use both numerical data and qualitative information sources to compile a comprehensive and powerful evidence base. Collect and collate only as much evidence as you need to make robust and credible judgements.

The framework document lists the types of evidence you will be able to use (paragraph 100). The list is not exhaustive and you may draw on other evidence, reflecting local circumstances. Sources of information which provide contextual information for the area will also be important. For example, you will need to access information about changes in national, regional and local economies, the changing climate and social trends.

You must ensure that you triangulate relevant evidence from different sources and that the totality of the evidence base is used to inform the assessment. You should look for inconsistencies and contradictions within different evidence sources and use this to frame your discussions and investigations. You should also not lose sight of single pieces of evidence that can act as an early warning or direct a line of enquiry.

In all cases you will need to assess how reliable and robust each item of evidence is, and take account of the quality of the evidence when deciding whether to use it, and how to use it. Data quality can be compromised due to a variety of reasons, such as poor data collection methods, miscalculations or inconsistent applications of definitions. You should talk to the auditor about their investigations into data quality as part of their value for money in use of resources work. This will be especially important in helping you judge how much you can rely on data and information produced by local organisations when it is not subject to other external verification.

You will not normally carry out activities such as focus groups or interviews to gather new evidence. Wherever appropriate you should use the information that local partners and organisations rely on to manage their services and measure their progress against their priorities. This will help you reduce and minimise the administrative impact on local partners and organisations.
You should work to the COUNT principle and collect evidence once and use it numerous times. This means that you will share evidence with colleagues to remove unnecessary requests for information. This applies to information about each area and to information across areas. For example, because of the wide geographical basis for many issues, especially those to do with the environment and economy, it is important to understand the evidence being used and the emerging judgements in neighbouring areas.

**Local area agreements, sustainable community strategies and other locally agreed targets**

The monitoring arrangements of local partners should show progress towards achieving the priority outcomes. You should expect to see, for example:

- a clear link between baseline data or local evidence which justifies why a specific issue has been established as a priority;
- evidence that is comprehensive, robust and which clearly shows the need for the chosen priorities;
- ambitious but achievable targets;
- evidence that improvements are being achieved and progress is being made towards targets and milestones (if time series data exists).

**Issues to be aware of**

It is important to fully understand what target has been set: for example, the overall area may appear to be performing fairly well against one of its local area agreement targets, but the actual target may refer to a specific ward.

At the time local area agreements were first negotiated data was not available to inform all National Indicators – you should find out what other evidence was used in these cases.

**The National Indicator Set and other national data**

You will use a wide base of nationally available data for CAA. We will make data available to you using a performance information reporting tool. Quantitative information, such as the National Indicator Set, provides a useful starting position for evidence to inform CAA. The National Indicator Set provides datasets which are robustly collected using consistent definitions. This enables us to make comparisons. Some comparisons that are useful to inform CAA include:

- How does data for the area or organisation compare to other areas or organisations?
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- How does the latest data for the area or organisation compare to previous data over time?

- How does data for the area or organisation compare to targets (for example the local area agreement targets) or national standards?

- How does data for one indicator compare to other indicators which might be related? For example, how do unemployment rates in the area compare to data about health equalities?

**Issues to be aware of**

It can be tempting to think that data can provide conclusive answers to questions or issues. But the limitations of data need to be recognised and built into the fieldwork for CAA. As the name suggests, indicators indicate things; they do not provide all the answers. You should use data as ‘can-openers’. This means you should use data to help you formulate questions and identify issues for further exploration. But you should not rely on data alone for publicly reported assessment judgements. You should seek to triangulate data with other evidence and fieldwork. This will help you to minimise the potential effect of the limitations of data.

**Limitations of data include:**

- **Availability:** The range of data: datasets and indicators have been developed to provide information about many important policy areas, but not all. There are few national datasets available for issues such as bio-diversity, air quality, economic prospects for different ethnic groups, and take-up of services at a local level. Not all of the data for the National Indicator Set will be available for the first year of CAA. The timetables for data collection and publication of the NIS by central government departments means that much of the data will not be available until late autumn 2009 or early spring 2010.
The following table shows the position on availability of the National Indicator Set:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Indicator Set availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of national indicators available for 1 July 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information supplied by Communities and Local Government, 20 March 2009

- **The quality of data**: if the quality of data is poor then conclusions drawn from it can be wrong. Data quality can be compromised due to a variety of reasons such as poor data collection methods, miscalculations or inconsistent applications of definitions. Assessments based on data when the quality of the data is not sufficiently robust will not be credible and therefore open to challenge.

- **The age of data**: although the timeliness of national data has improved, it will always take some time to centrally collate, verify and publish data. Other sources of information may be more up-to-date.

- **The scale of the data**: nationally available quantitative information provides useful comparisons between areas, but there is limited national data which can be broken down to small areas, such as wards, to provide this sort of insight.

**Findings from inspection, regulation and audit, including relevant evidence from other performance frameworks**

Evidence from inspection and regulation activities provides vital information and judgements from specialist experts and therefore you should use it to inform specific elements of your assessments. You should check which services have been assessed and how long ago the assessment took place. There should be evidence to tell you if findings and recommendations were acted upon and whether this has resulted in improvements. You should also check which inspection or regulatory activities are planned for the area or authority and how inspectorates are preparing for them.
Local performance management information used to monitor local priorities including any self-assessments and evidence from scrutiny

The use of locally defined and collected information and intelligence is vital for both the area and organisational assessments. Successful organisations monitor their performance rigorously and robustly and this will be assessed as part of the managing performance theme of the organisational assessment. It follows that where partners and organisations use high quality information to monitor their performance, the less intensive our assessments will need to be.

In deciding what data to use, you should consider:

- Is the collation and analysis of local data or intelligence specific to the needs of the local community? This could be via Local Information Systems or by commissioned studies and research projects?

- Is the data tailored to suit the local priorities, whether they are about quality of life based outcomes or monitoring of service quality?

- Is the evidence available from local partners from a broad enough base to enable us to effectively monitor progress?

Further information about the benefits and use of local information systems, as well as case studies, can be found in the Local Information Systems research commissioned by Communities and Local Government. The Standards for Better Quality Data provide a useful overview about improving information to support decision making. Some other Performance Measurement Resources may also provide useful guidance.

Briefings or evidence from other agencies including government offices in the regions, strategic health authorities, the Homes and Communities Agency and regional development agencies

Government offices in the regions track the progress of performance against local area agreement targets. Other agencies have specific roles to bring together quantitative data and information on performance to address national policy initiatives, such as improving public health. Local and regional agencies can also provide specialist intelligence on issues where there is little or no performance data, such as coastal erosion. You might find such information useful as you triangulate your evidence or question your emerging judgements. You will need to consider what spatial level the information covers as this may be wider than the county local strategic partnership area.
The views of people who use services including residents, third sector organisations and local businesses in the area

The performance framework for local public services puts the views of local people and organisations at its heart. Successful organisations systematically collect the views and opinions of their service users and act upon them. Councils and their partners collect a wealth of information about what local people and organisations think about the area and the services they receive. Information will have often been collected using quantitative survey techniques. Most local partnerships also employ a range of qualitative engagement methods which not only provide a powerful insight into people’s perceptions, but can also specifically target groups who may be less likely to respond to surveys.

You should make as much use of the views of local residents and organisations as possible. A central element of the first question of the area assessment is the extent to which local people’s aspirations are reflected in the local priorities of the local strategic partnership. The organisational assessment will also consider how well the organisation is delivering priority services, outcomes and improvements that are important to local people. You should draw on a range of information that the organisation or local partnership has collected as well as using nationally collated information about perception information.

In deciding what data to use, you should consider:

- making full use of data provided by quantitative surveys such as the Place Survey. It will be particularly useful where local partners have broken down the data by demographic or geographic groups to understand how views within the community differ;

- if data from surveys is triangulated with non-survey data, other forms of intelligence and information collected from other engagement activities to gain a more comprehensive understanding of issues;

- if imaginative qualitative engagement methods have been used to obtain the views of particular groups or people whose circumstances make them vulnerable;

- if the consultation method and targeted or random sample was appropriate;

- if appropriate opportunities were given for the target respondents to take part, for example, whether translation services were provided, whether respondents were given enough time to complete questionnaires;

- if there is the potential for any bias to have influenced the findings; and
• if the survey data is reliable - confidence intervals can indicate the reliability of the results.

12.2 Other performance frameworks

CAA covers outcomes and services delivered by councils on their own or in partnership. Where an assessment by a regulator or inspectorate under a different framework is relevant to CAA, we will rely on that assessment and treat it as quality assured evidence. We will also rely on assessments within the CAA framework carried out by individual inspectorates, for example Ofsted’s children’s services rating and the Care Quality Commission’s adult social care assessment.

The government and inspectorates are committed to aligning performance frameworks to eliminate duplication and promote greater consistency. Because different frameworks are being reviewed at different times, this alignment will take some time to complete.

Alignment of performance frameworks does not mean that we will take the same approach in each. The focus and context of different service sectors varies considerably, with some, for example, being directly controlled through a national management structure and others more locally determined. The aim of alignment is to ensure coherence and consistency across assessments in related services or shared functions, maximise sharing of information, intelligence and understanding between the relevant inspectorates, and avoid duplication of work and evidence gathering. For practical purposes, this will depend on good communication, mutual understanding and openness in sharing information. This will take time to develop, particularly where local staffing arrangements for contributing to CAA are new or not yet in place.

Some frameworks use national performance indicators that are also included within the National Indicator Set used in CAA.

Where an issue falls within the scope of another performance framework but there is no recent assessment, you should work with the relevant inspectorate representatives to agree how to deal with this. This may simply mean concluding that there is insufficient evidence and how this affects our judgement on future prospects will depend on the nature and significance of the issue.

The performance frameworks and assessment results most likely to be of significance to CAA are set out below:
Health

The annual health check of primary care trusts and national health service trusts was introduced in 2004/05. The Care Quality Commission will carry out the final health check in 2009 and report its judgements in October. The health check assesses compliance with core standards and performance against national targets. It incorporates the managing finances theme of auditors’ use of resources assessment. After 2009, these assessments will be replaced by periodic reviews of commissioning by primary care trusts and provision of healthcare by national health service trusts. The details and frequency of periodic reviews will be determined in Summer 2009, following a consultation exercise which concluded in March 2009.

Regulation of providers of care services

Such regulation is undertaken by the Care Quality Commission for adult care services. It is undertaken by Ofsted for children’s care services (see also below). It covers, for example, residential care homes. The framework will provide evidence on the general standard of care in the area for some of the people in most vulnerable circumstances and can be used to highlight the performance of councils that commission and purchase these services.

The Care Quality Commission undertake regulation of providers of adult social care and independent healthcare on a targeted risk basis throughout the year. The purpose is to regulate, inspect and review all registered care and independent healthcare providers in England. For adult social care this leads to a published quality rating for each service. The longest period between inspections is three years for adult social care and five years for healthcare. This assessment will be replaced by a new regulatory scheme from 1 April 2010 which will include NHS providers for the first time.

Adult social services

In 2009 Care Quality Commission’s first annual performance assessment of adult social care will be reported in November to align with the first CAA publication. It is an assessment of all councils with adult social care responsibilities in England. It contributes to the improvement agenda for people who use services, and their carers. Care Quality Commission has been consulting on how in 2010 its assessments of councils and primary care trusts as commissioners might be more closely aligned and reported.
Children and young people

Ofsted has specific responsibility for the assessment of children’s services and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector to provide an annual rating of each council’s children’s services. From 1 April 2009, Ofsted will provide a performance profile of outcomes and services for children and young people. This performance profile will draw together evidence from inspection and regulation, which will be reviewed quarterly, alongside National Indicator Set evidence about Every Child Matters outcomes. Inspectors will use the evidence from the profile, supplemented by other qualitative evidence, to arrive at an overall annual rating of performance of children’s services. It will cover the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The rating will contribute key evidence to the area and organisational assessments Ofsted will publish the rating, with key supporting evidence, in November each year as part of the organisational assessment.

Ofsted’s unannounced inspections of each local authority’s arrangements for children and young people’s social care contact, referral and assessment will be carried out throughout the year from 1 April 2009.

Ofsted and Care Quality Commission’s inspections of area safeguarding and looked after children services are implemented from 1 April 2009. These full inspections will be carried out on a three year rolling programme. These inspections will evaluate how well services work together to safeguard children and young people and support looked after children, young people and care leavers.

Police

HMIC’s rounded assessment of the performance of each of the 39 police forces in England will be implemented from Autumn 2009. The approach is being developed. The current planning assumption is that a rounded assessment of each force will be available quarterly, and will include an assessment of the force-wide performance in each of five domains: confidence, local crime and policing, protection from serious harm, value for money, and managing the organisation. It will cover partnership working.

Police authority inspections will be carried out from Autumn 2009, and each one will be reported once it is completed. The inspections will be carried out by HMIC with contributions from the Audit Commission. They will assess the effectiveness of governance, productivity, performance monitoring and achievements through partnership.
Prisons

HMI Prisons inspects every prison on a five-year cycle. The programme includes one full inspection and one follow-up inspection during that period. Juvenile and immigration removal centres are inspected on a three-year cycle. All unannounced follow-up inspections are scheduled on a risk assessed basis. Establishments deemed high-risk are revisited for a full follow-up within 12-36 months of a full inspection to assess progress against previous recommendations. Lower risk establishments are revisited for a short follow-up 24-36 months after their last full inspection.

Probation

The Youth Justice Board reporting framework provides information about youth offending teams. The national offender management service probation framework provides information about adult offending.

HMI Probation undertakes, jointly with other inspectorates, inspections of both adult and youth offending work in each area of the country. Assessing the quality of work undertaken with a representative sample of cases, each inspection measures how often the work with each case is being done well enough.

Fire

The Audit Commission is responsible for providing assurance that the 46 fire and rescue services in England meet the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework when providing services to local people and businesses. From April 2009 the effectiveness of each fire service will be assessed through an organisational assessment which combines the external auditor’s assessment of value for money in the use of resources with an assessment of the fire service’s performance. The organisational assessment will be reported in November each year.

Housing

Management of social housing is regulated by the Tenant Services Authority, which will set standards for all social landlords. This will include both independent landlords (housing associations and other registered private bodies) and local authority landlords and, where created, Arms Length Management Organisations, (subject to legislation, intended to start in 2010). The Tenant Services Authority will commission the Audit Commission to carry out inspections of social landlord management as part of the regulatory system.
Assessments of social housing were implemented in December 2008 for registered social landlords. They will apply to local authority landlord services from April 2010. The assessment covers the standards for social housing. The scope will vary between organisations, some will be more relevant than others to CAA, for example, a landlord with a large stock holding in one area is likely to be important to CAA.

### 12.3 Self-assessment

Local strategic partnerships and organisations are not required to undertake a self-assessment as part of CAA. You should use, wherever possible, information and evidence which local partners use to manage their own performance. This is an important principle of CAA. The primary responsibility for evaluating and understanding performance and improvement rests with the local partners, individually and collectively. Self-assessment should therefore be something they do for themselves, not for inspectorates.

Sector specific self-assessments will continue to form part of some other performance frameworks in 2008. Where these are available they will form part of your evidence base.

The IDeA has produced a template for local partner self-assessment. If the local partners choose to produce a self-assessment in the suggested format it will form part of your evidence base, although other approaches may be equally valid. The more credible and quality assured the self-assessment and the evidence which supports it, the more you will be able to rely on it and so reduce additional evidence gathering. Any self-assessment should reflect honest appraisal, demonstrating self-awareness and a clear sense of where progress and improvement will be targeted. Self-assessments that are more of a public relations exercise than a rigorous evaluation are unlikely to provide much confidence about future improvement.

### 12.4 Freedom of information and CAA

As inspectorates we are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) and must provide responses to requests for information in accordance with the law, taking into account our policies and relevant joint agreements.

We will provide additional guidance about freedom of information for CAA and retaining documents shortly. Meanwhile, if you have any questions or receive a request for information, you should contact your inspectorate’s information and compliance officer (or equivalent) for advice.
Section 13: Quality Assurance

13.1 Overall approach

The purpose of quality assurance is to ensure quality of, and consistency between, area and organisational assessments as well as the links between them. It will, for example, ensure that decisions to use red and green flags, and organisational assessment scores, are based on sound evidence and awarded in line with the agreed processes. It will help you ensure also that our reports have impact.

Our assessments and judgements must meet our five key principles of quality assurance. They must be:

- robust;
- equitable;
- fair;
- transparent; and
- based on sufficient and reliable evidence.

Inspectorates, acting individually or jointly, are responsible for ensuring that all assessment and judgments are supported by sufficient and reliable evidence. This 'right first time' approach means that each inspectorate will quality-assure the evidence, for which each has prime responsibility, according to their own procedures before it is submitted to the joint assessment system for collective consideration.

Quality assurance of the organisational assessments for district councils and fire and rescue services will be the responsibility of the Audit Commission. Similarly, ratings or grades provided for council children's services and for adult social care will be the responsibility of Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. These assessments will not be subject to the joint inspectorate quality assurance arrangements, but will be subject to the quality assurance arrangements of the responsible inspectorate.

You should take an ongoing, proportionate and risk-based approach to the quality assurance of both area and organisational assessments, and the links between them. By maintaining regular dialogue with the organisations and local partners you are assessing, regularly reviewing available evidence and sharing emerging findings, you will avoid undue reliance on retrospective review prior to publication.
Quality assurance of first stage analysis

At the first stage analysis, each inspectorate is responsible for providing evidence, in accordance with its own quality assured evidence arrangements, in areas where it has primary responsibility, to the joint assessment system. Only evidence that has been quality assured will be included on joint assessment system.

Quality assurance of second stage analysis

The CAA Lead will coordinate the joint second stage analysis. The purpose of this stage is to identify and discuss key issues arising from the new findings that emerge from the second stage analysis of all available and relevant evidence. Importantly it will offer fresh insight into the area and organisational effectiveness, as well as identifying the obstacles to improving outcomes. In advance of the meeting, the CAA Lead will coordinate the views of the inspectorates on the key issues that will need discussion. Those issues will focus on identifying any joint tags, any joint flags and tentative scores based on evidence in the joint assessment system.

At this stage you will ensure that emerging and draft tags, flags and scores are based properly on sufficient and reliable evidence. The joint assessment system will provide an audit trail for this and will show that they have been arrived at in accordance with the published guidance. For an area assessment, this means ensuring that the second stage analysis is forward looking, focused on outcomes and therefore relates to the future prospects described in the third question. For the organisational assessment, the analysis will need to show that it is addressing the key lines of enquiry in line with published guidance. You will need to ensure that the emerging picture in your areas and organisations are considered alongside those in similar areas and organisations.

On a proportionate and risk basis you can use independent experts to help you quality assure your second stage analysis. You can do this by directly involving independent experts in your discussions or through the use of advisory panels as appropriate.

13.2 Independent expert involvement in quality assurance

Independent experts can assist you in ensuring consistency of quality. They also aid transparency, help you facilitate interchange of skills and knowledge across the sectors and strengthen the credibility of your assessments.
Independent experts are people from a wide range of backgrounds and professions who have significant experience in their area and working with local partnerships. For CAA this can include: senior local government councillors; primary care trust non-executive directors; people who are experts by experience in the services they use; third sector representatives; private sector representatives; and senior officers and professionals from councils, fire services, probation services, prison services and primary care trusts.

Independent experts will receive training for their roles in CAA.

### 13.3 National overview arrangements

We share the responsibility for making judgements about the use of red and green flags, and determining organisational assessment scores for London, unitary, metropolitan, unitary and county councils. We want to assure ourselves that these are awarded fairly and consistently across the country and that second stage analysis findings meet the five quality assurance principles.

National overview will do this **not** by looking at each area and organisational assessment in detail but by:

- looking at the emerging national picture, as draft judgements and reports are agreed locally;
- sampling emerging judgements by regions and types of area;
- looking at high risk areas or where secondary analysis has been complex or inconclusive;
- identifying any unusual or outlying assessments, including where a high number of red and/or green flags have been used and/or where red or green flags have been used for major or entire service areas; and
- identifying any area or organisational assessments to be considered by the advisory panels.

Inspectorates may refer particular issues in an individual area or organisational assessment to national overview. This is most likely in cases of high risk areas or where secondary analysis has been complex or inconclusive.

In year 1, we will do this in June 2009 and again in October 2009. These arrangements will be coordinated centrally by the Audit Commission.
Inspectorates will collectively consider the quality and consistency of reports prior to publication.

### 13.4 Expert advisory panels

Following second stage analysis, expert advisory panels will look at a sample of proposed red and green flags at least once a year. In year 1, this will be scheduled in late June/July 2009. This will offer insight into the quality of the secondary analysis processes and the likely impact of our assessments. It will also aid consistency and ensure sampling is fair and representative.

The panel’s role will be advisory. They will not look at the detailed content of the joint assessment system or carry out further analysis or evaluation. Any comments from the panel will be recorded in the joint assessment system and may be considered at national overview. They will consider a sample of proposed red and green flags for the area assessments. Where a red or green flag is proposed they may review and comment on any information presented by you in support of a red or green flag. They may also consider other issues in the area assessment or organisational assessment; for example confirming the link through from a red flag into any organisational assessment.

Depending on how you have organised your engagement with local partners or their representatives, the involvement of expert panels may occur in advance of scheduled engagement or after such engagement.

Expert advisory panels will be coordinated by the Audit Commission and organised on a government office regional basis. The panel will be chaired by a representative of one of the inspectorates and may consist of:

- independent experts drawn from a pool of local government, heath, social care, criminal justice, community safety and the third and private sector with partnership experience;

- a representative from each relevant inspectorate (actual attendance will be dependant on the issues to be discussed); and

- secretariat support staff provided by the Audit Commission.

We will review this approach in December 2009.
13.5 Reviews of red flags and scored judgements

We aim to provide fair and accurate judgements about areas and the organisations within them, and have quality assurance arrangements in place to ensure this. However, disagreements may arise from time to time between the Inspectorates and a council about its organisational assessment or a local strategic partnership about its area assessment.

Where a council or fire and rescue authority disagrees with its organisational assessment score, or a local strategic partnership disagrees with the use of a red flag in the area assessment, it may request a review of the disputed score or red flag in accordance with the joint inspectorate review procedure for CAA. The review procedure will provide a clear and transparent mechanism to resolve disputes. We will consult on our proposals for the review procedure, including a proposal to establish a joint inspectorate review panel, whose members will have had no prior involvement in the disputed decision. We will publish our approach by July 2009.

13.6 Complaints

Complaints are defined as issues of dissatisfaction raised by a council, fire and rescue authority or a local strategic partnership which do not have an impact on flags, scores or evidence analysis. Complaints will be handled independently of the review procedure. If a complaint is received alongside a review request, the review will be considered in advance of the complaint, unless it is deemed appropriate to consider them together.

Complaints relating to an individual inspectorate will be handled according to each inspectorate’s own complaints procedure. Where a single complaint is made against two or more inspectorates it will be coordinated by a nominated inspectorate.

13.7 Lawful judgements and decisions

As public bodies, all inspectorates are open to judicial review by authorities or individuals wishing to challenge decisions made by them. Bodies who are dissatisfied with a finding or judgement may seek to challenge our decision-making on the grounds that it is unlawful where they are unable to resolve matters through our internal processes.
Public bodies must make their decisions in a way that is fair, rational and within their legal powers in order for the decisions to be lawful. In doing so they must take into account all relevant considerations and ignore irrelevant considerations.

For our decisions to be lawful, you should ensure that you:

- take into consideration only those pieces of evidence that are relevant to the judgement being made;
- make sure that the body the judgement concerns has a fair opportunity to put its case;
- provide individuals with an opportunity to respond where adverse comments are made about such individuals;
- take steps to ensure that evidence is reliable, for example, by corroborating it against other sources;
- give appropriate weight to pieces of evidence, for example relatively minor pieces of information should not disproportionately influence the overall findings;
- assess information with an open mind so that there is no bias or appearance of bias;
- do not give the impression that an inspectorate or its officers holds a detrimental view of local partnerships, organisations or individuals within them; and
- use evidence in a rational way, and draw from it only logical inferences or conclusions.

You also need to ensure that a full audit trail of your decision-making process is maintained on the joint assessment system. You will need to be able to identify and trace all the material that forms the basis on which individual and overall judgements have been made, whether it is held on the joint assessment system or elsewhere.
Section 14: Learning from your work

What's this about?

As you work on your assessments you will come across examples of successful and innovative practice. You may also identify issues which would benefit from further research or study. It is really important that you share any key points of learning more widely.

During 2009/10 you will learn a great deal about implementing the CAA methodology. You will learn about what works well in practice and about how we can improve our approach for future years. You will get feedback about CAA, and come across examples of the impact that it is having. Sharing this learning will be very important.

Why is it important?

By sharing your knowledge you can help us develop a national picture about what is working well, and what could be improved, across the public sector. We may be able to develop such learning into case studies and success stories for training events, conferences, national reports and relevant websites. By sharing our knowledge, we will be able to promote and support public sector improvement more effectively.

Your feedback on CAA, and how best to put it into practice, will inform the evaluation of CAA. The knowledge that you share will influence how we evolve the CAA methodology for future years, and inform any updates to the guidance.

What might you look for?

When you add judgements to the joint assessment system you can highlight issues which might be relevant for sharing more widely by selecting the check box: ‘Could this be useful to share with others?’

Look for interesting examples of good practice and success stories in how public services and outcomes are delivered. Identify interesting innovations which are being implemented so we can track their progress. Identify topics of importance to local people and/or professionals which might benefit from further research or study.

Look for examples of successful practice in the practical arrangements for CAA. Identify anything we can improve in the CAA methodology and how we implement it.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Look for examples of the impact CAA is having, for example in changing the way local partners and organisations manage themselves and perform their functions and on the quality of public services and the associated outcomes.

The Audit Commission’s knowledge team will work with CAA Leads and other colleagues to help capture relevant information. In the Audit Commission, regional core teams, national service leads and knowledge network members will also help you identify and capture relevant knowledge for sharing.
Section 15: Improvement planning and inspection

15.1 Improvement planning

The purpose of improvement planning is to identify what needs to change to improve performance in local services and outcomes and to identify how to best stimulate, facilitate or support such improvement. It may follow or give rise to inspection.

Local strategic partnerships and local organisations are responsible for their own improvement and have primary responsibility for improvement planning. However, other agencies, including some of the inspectorates, have degrees of responsibility for aspects of improvement planning. Some inspectorates such as Ofsted do not have improvement planning as part of their role.

Improvement planning typically includes, leads to or arises from:

- improvement action planned by a local strategic partnership or organisation;
- peer or sector-led support, including bringing in an external adviser, appointing new leaders and pairing the organisation with one that is higher performing;
- support plans agreed by government offices in the regions, central government, regional improvement efficiency partnerships, strategic health authorities or other improvement agencies;
- inspectorates’ inspection plans and any inspectorate ‘non-inspection activity’ such as audit; and/or
- intervention by government in exceptional circumstances, including by the issue of improvement notices.
Whatever their role, all the key agencies in each area who have responsibility for driving and/or shaping improvement must liaise to develop a coordinated and coherent approach. This includes public sector providers, inspectorates, government offices in the regions, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships, joint improvement partnerships, strategic health authorities and others. Within this context, the inspectorates will work with each other to plan their inspections. As inspection proposals emerge, and when final plans are agreed, you will share these with local partners responsible for delivery and commissioning, and with government offices in the regions, bearing in mind any constraints about confidentiality and length of notice.

### 15.2 Government offices in the regions, inspectorates and regional improvement and efficiency partnerships

The respective roles of government offices in the regions, regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and the inspectorates are distinct and complementary. In July 2008 Communities and Local Government published a paper *Roles and responsibilities in the local performance framework*, which outlined the principles and roles for improvement planning and liaison. Inspectorates, government offices in the regions and regional improvement and efficiency partnerships are implementing these principles in every region. The precise arrangements for implementing the principles are being adapted to fit local circumstances. For example, some regions have produced formal documents to describe new engagement and information sharing arrangements, while others are integrating the commitment to engage into arrangements already established. But the objectives remain the same: for example, to avoid duplication and unnecessary overlap, and to develop a coherent and coordinated approach that is clearly communicated to local partners.

Similarly, each inspectorate will have its own arrangements for sharing information with government offices in the regions, but a general commitment to coordinate our respective work applies to us all.

CAA Leads will engage regularly with government offices locality managers to make sure we effectively manage the links between our respective roles and avoid duplication or unnecessary overlap. Government offices in the regions, for example, can helpfully provide links to regional agencies such as regional development agencies and Jobcentreplus. CAA Leads may also liaise with regional improvement and efficiency partnerships and the joint improvement partnerships where necessary 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.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Some key points about the respective roles of inspectorates, government offices in the regions and regional improvement and efficiency partnerships are set out below.

Inspectorates will work together in an area to:

- conduct CAA, which will include independent assessment of the prospects for achieving local area agreement and other priorities;
- identify where further or different action is needed to improve outcomes, recognising that it is not the remit of all inspectorates to determine what that action is outside of inspection;
- agree the scope and timing of any tailored and triggered inspection;
- share the emerging findings and results of CAA with government offices in the regions to inform the improvement planning process in each area, including where inspection will be carried out;
- assess the arrangements for securing the quality of the data on which CAAs reporting depends, including financial information;
- help identify trends and issues that are obstacles to improving outcomes; and
- independently capture and share innovative practice that is leading to rapidly improving, sustainable and/or outstanding outcomes.

Government offices in the regions will:

- negotiate and agree the local area agreement with each county or unitary council and their partners to recommend to the Secretary of State;
- coordinate development and delivery of government policy in an area;
- manage central government’s relationship with each local area;
- share with the inspectorates any data and intelligence relevant to CAA;
- help decide in the light of CAA findings and other evidence, whether improvement action or intervention might be appropriate and, if so, coordinate any government-led improvement action;
- be responsible for the annual review of local area agreements, including any negotiations on behalf of government to refresh or modify the local area agreement, drawing on evidence from the CAA and other sources; and
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- ensure a link between the achievement of targets linked to performance indicators in local area agreements and regional delivery against national public service agreement targets.

Regional improvement and efficiency partnerships will, for example:

- act as a ‘hub’ for improvement activity in the region, working with other regional and sub-regional improvement agencies and local government’s national improvement bodies;
- develop and implement an improvement and efficiency strategy in each region;
- support councils and their partners to deliver high quality and value public services;
- provide focused support to councils and partnerships in difficulty; and
- share best practice and provide peer review within the region.

15.3 Joint inspection planning

Inspectorates have committed to work together to coordinate our activity. Underpinning this commitment we each have a formal duty to cooperate with each other. We will target our resources to where improvement is most needed or where inspections can add most value. We will join up our inspection activity, where and when we can, and deploy our resources efficiently to ensure our activity is proportionate.

We need to strike the right balance between national and local triggers of inspection. Engagement about inspection plans will therefore take place locally and nationally.

Local inspection planning

Within CAA, the need for triggered and targeted inspection will be determined by inspectorates. You may identify a need for inspection as you undertake your area and organisational assessment work.

You should consider whether triggered and tailored inspection might be appropriate while undertaking your CAA stage 1 and stage 2 analyses, and at any local improvement planning discussions. And, subject to any issues about confidentiality, the CAA Lead, or an appropriate member of his or her area team, should discuss the emerging proposals for inspection with local partners and organisations.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

You will need to put forward any recommendations you have for triggered inspection to a national inspection planning group. The group will review your proposals each quarter, and agree them nationally. The national group will liaise with the relevant CAA Leads and others as necessary.

When you put forward your proposals for triggered inspection to the national inspection planning group you will need to supply the following information, using the joint assessment system:

- the area and organisations affected;
- where and what will be done - the scope, focus and type of inspection;
- who - which inspectorate(s) will be involved and which will lead joint inspections;
- when – the start and finish dates of the inspection;
- why – the purpose of the inspection, which must be one of our stated purposes of inspection;
- how – the methodology you will use;
- the beneficial impact you expect it to have;
- the inspection cost in total £;
- the inspection fee in total £ if one is charged; and
- the number of inspection days - the resource used by the inspectorates to undertake the activity.

We will use this same information when we publish the relevant plans on our website(s).

Discussions are currently underway to develop an agreed method to also help you record:

- the administrative impact on the inspected body counted in days – this will be a standard estimated time which organisations may have to dedicate to servicing the inspection; and
- the administrative impact in £ cost to the inspected body – we will multiply the number of days by a notional cost.
National inspection planning

As well as considering the local and regional context, relevant inspection proposals will be reviewed by a national inspection planning group. While it is important that we should respond to local needs and circumstances and tailor activity to the local area, national coordination will help ensure that our inspection resources are deployed where they are needed most. A priority in one area may not be a top priority when considered in a wider regional or national context. So we might not be able to implement all local recommendations. Similarly, in some cases the need for an inspection will be driven by discussions at a national level or by rolling programme schedules. We will, for example, always respond urgently to any formal requests from a Secretary of State for an inspection. And because plans for relevant short notice and unannounced inspections will not be shared widely, any coordination of these programmes will have to take place nationally.

On the national inspection planning group will be representatives from across the inspectorates. The group will meet at least quarterly to review relevant inspection plans and consider new proposals for triggered inspection. The more detailed work to develop the plans will be coordinated by the Audit Commission’s local government and assessment directorate, liaising with management teams of the other inspectorates. If urgent joint inspection is needed, agreement will normally be reached by the central management teams of the relevant inspectorates.

What might we inspect?

Area and organisational assessments may give rise to new and different kinds of inspection. Under CAA, we expect a greater proportion of inspection activity to be delivered jointly, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of local area agreement targets and the importance of partnership working. Inspection activity triggered by CAA findings, usually considered after the award of a red flag or arising from the organisational assessment, will be risk-based, proportionate and tailored to local circumstances. We will target inspection resources where inspection can add most value. We will scale and focus our inspections so that we can undertake them effectively and efficiently, and so demonstrate value for money.

You should consider how regular CAA assessment work, national and local surveys and other institutional inspection and regulation will contribute to CAA and complement triggered inspection.
Making sure our inspection plans are reasonable

Where the total amount of inspection proposed for any one organisation or area does not seem proportionate or reasonable, the CAA Lead should work with the relevant inspectorate representatives to tackle this. You might wish to explore with whether:

- the inspections, or parts of each of them, can be combined;
- it is possible for later inspection to use findings of earlier inspections, and so reduce the amount of work involved; and/or
- the on-site dates can be adjusted to reduce any overlap or clash.

Where it is possible to combine the inspections, or parts of them, the CAA Lead should seek the views of the organisations to be inspected to see if this would reduce the administrative impact.

If adjustments cannot be made locally, and the CAA Lead or other inspectorate considers that the total amount of inspection proposed remains unreasonable, he or she should refer the matter to the national inspection planning group.

Sharing information about inspection plans

Our arrangements for planning inspections and sharing information about when they will take place will be different depending on the type of inspection.

Inspections triggered by CAA will often result from your stage 2 analysis and local improvement planning. You should discuss any proposals you have about inspection with the organisations or local partners affected. You can share openly with inspectorate colleagues and auditors your suggestions and recommendations for inspections triggered in this way. CAA Leads should also share proposals for inspection with colleagues in their region to identify the regional implications of any proposals, including for fees and resourcing.

Regulatory inspections and inspections of institutions will be scheduled independently by the relevant inspectorates. We will not share information about when these inspections will take place, and we will not publish the timetables for these inspections on our joint website. Examples of regulatory and institutional inspections include:

- Care Quality Commission inspections of care providers: homes for older people, homes for adults, domiciliary care, and nurses agencies; and
- Ofsted inspections of schools and colleges, children’s homes, and registered childcare.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Information about relevant short notice and unannounced inspection schedules will be exchanged between a few individuals responsible for national inspection planning. The information about these plans will be treated as confidential.

Inspectorates sometimes give little or no notice of inspection for good reasons, including to reduce the burden on services. Where relevant, you will be notified about such inspections as soon as the organisation to be inspected is given formal notice about the inspection. Examples of these kinds of inspections include:

- the Audit Commission’s short-notice inspections of housing services;
- Ofsted’s local authority inspections of safeguarding and looked after children;
- Ofsted’s unannounced safeguarding inspections of local authority contact, referral and assessment centre arrangements; and
- HMIC’s unannounced inspections of police custody facilities.

If a Secretary of State requires an urgent inspection to be scheduled, inspectorates will inform others as soon as is practicable.

The national inspection planning group will also share information and proposals about relevant new inspection frameworks and methodologies. Its aim will be to develop consistent approaches to inspection, and agree a flexible methodology for joint inspectorate inspections under CAA.

Gate-keeping legislation

Each of the main inspectorates has gate-keeping responsibilities. This means that an inspectorate can prevent or limit certain proposed inspections of specified organisations within its remit. It can do this where the inspectorate considers that the proposed inspection would impose an unreasonable burden on the organisation, or would if carried out in a particular way. The responsibilities require the gate-keepers to consider what is to be inspected, when an inspection might take place, and how the organisation is to be inspected. If a gate-keeper considers that the burden of a proposed inspection is unreasonable, it must give notice to the person or body not to carry out the proposed inspection, or not to carry it out in a particular way. We expect that our respective gate-keeping responsibilities will normally be exercised through joint inspection planning, as outlined above.
The gate-keepers are:

- for schools, colleges, early years providers, adult learning and children’s social care providers: Ofsted;
- healthcare bodies: the Care Quality Commission;
- police forces and police authorities: HMIC;
- probation boards (and trusts): HMI Probation;
- young offender institutions, prisons and immigration detention facilities: HMI Prisons; and
- for councils, fire and rescue authorities, and some other local authorities such as passenger transport authorities, national parks, and waste disposal authorities: the Audit Commission.

The kinds of inspection not covered by gate-keeping responsibilities include Care Quality Commission and Ofsted inspections where requested by a Secretary of State; Care Quality Commission Mental Health Act inspections and Mental Capacity Act inspections; and regulatory and institutional inspections, such as those of care homes, schools, adoption and fostering agencies, family centres and homes for children. Gate-keeping responsibilities will also not apply to youth offending team inspections carried out by HMI Probation.

**15.4 Links to audit planning**

You will need to coordinate your inspection planning with audit planning locally. Below is some information about how auditors plan their work.

When planning their work in relation to use of resources assessments, auditors consider and assess the significant operational and financial risks to the achievement of the organisation’s objectives which are also relevant to auditors’ responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice. The auditor’s assessment of what is significant is a matter of professional judgement and includes consideration of both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Auditors discuss their assessment of risk with the audited organisation.
Auditors consider the organisation's own assessment of the risks it faces and its arrangements for managing and addressing the risks. When considering their response to these risks, and so the implications for audit planning, auditors have regard to:

- how the organisation has responded to previous audit work;
- the results of performance assessments by the Audit Commission and the work of other inspectorates. Under CAA this includes the findings of inspectorates that have been subject to appropriate quality assurance and which have been input into the joint assessment system as well as the results of organisational and area assessments; and
- relevant improvement needs, identified in discussion with the Audit Commission or other statutory inspectorates.

On the basis of their risk assessment auditors then plan their work and decide whether to:

- simply highlight the risk to the audited organisation;
- defer any work in the light of current or planned work by the organisation itself or by the Audit Commission, inspectorates or other relevant review agencies; or
- carry out audit work in relation to specific risks to form a view on the adequacy of the organisation's stewardship and governance and corporate performance management and financial management arrangements.

In considering whether to carry out work in relation to a particular risk, auditors have regard to the potential for them to contribute to improvement in the delivery of the functions of the audited organisation. This may include working with others in order to assess how well risks arising from the organisation's involvement in partnerships or other joint-working arrangements are being addressed.
Appendix 1 - Ten Themes

This section has ten themes that will help you manage your evidence in the joint assessment system. The evidence will be coded in the joint assessment system using the key words of the themes and local priorities that link to them. We will use these codes to draw out information about national trends and findings. These in turn will be used to draw together our learning from CAA and may inform future research and studies. We have chosen these themes because they represent the key issues that affect quality of life and many of them will therefore be referred to in the area’s local area agreement, multi-area agreement and sustainable community strategies.

While not a theme, we have also provided similar guidance on older people. This isn't a specific theme for the area assessment but most localities are considering the implications of higher percentages of the local population being 50 or over. This guidance will help you consider this in your assessment.

Each section looks at:

- What’s this about?
- Why is it important?
- What might you look for?

The links between the themes are as important as the themes in their own right. For example, if a neighbourhood is not well kept and there is graffiti and fly tipping, this could have an impact on how safe local people feel. Feeling unsafe at home or in a neighbourhood can have a detrimental impact on people’s health and well-being. Similarly, if people feel unsafe in an area, they may be less willing to cycle or walk through it, or use local services. This could limit opportunities to promote community cohesion, boost the local economy and reduce the environmental footprint.
How safe is the area?

What’s this about?

Here we consider the impact of local public service delivery on community safety outcomes. Being safe and feeling safe plays a major part in determining, in the hearts and minds of people, whether an area is a good place to live, work or visit. Keeping places safe requires local services to work together to address crime and anti-social behaviour. As well as crime and the fear of crime, many other issues affect community safety, personal well-being and public confidence. Such issues might include behaviours of groups or individuals, street conditions (including how well kept the area is), the quality of open spaces, and events such as traffic collisions, fires and flooding.

Councils, housing, health, police, fire and rescue and probation services all have key roles to play. People make judgements about how safe their place is based on what they experience in their own neighbourhoods. Local services need to understand the different communities and neighbourhoods in their areas.

Why is it important?

Concerns about safety are at or near the centre of most, if not all, communities; not only that local people are safe but also that they feel safe. In this context, perception is just as important as reality. Recent Ipsos Mori survey results show that a significant majority of the public put crime and safety at or near the top of their list of concerns. This is despite statistical evidence that crime rates have been falling for several years.

Communities that don’t feel safe, or think they should feel safer, can feel suppressed and suspicious. Local services that do not understand and take account of the differing needs of their neighbourhoods are less likely to deliver community safety outcomes.

Making people safer and making them feel safer by addressing crime and anti-social behaviour significantly enhances quality of life in an area and gives people the confidence to grow together as a community in a cohesive way.
What might you look for?

You should look for evidence that the local public service providers and their partners understand the key role they play in making people safer and making them feel safer. Also that they understand the needs of their communities, for instance how well probation services are managing offenders. You should look at how well the partners are engaging with communities about community safety and how well they are addressing their safety needs. You should consider how well the local services deliver their community safety objectives. Front line workers such as neighbourhood wardens, housing officers, neighbourhood policing teams and community fire safety officers are well placed to reassure local people. You should look for evidence that partnerships are enabling this to happen and are taking into account what front line workers and local people are telling them about their neighbourhoods.

You should focus on community safety indicators selected as priorities by the local strategic partnership, and make an assessment of current delivery and future prospects against those priorities. You should also consider achievements and future prospects in relation to sensitive issues which may not feature in published priorities, such as national indictors relating to preventing violent extremism and the performance of the criminal justice system in relation to offences brought to justice.

Reference material and further information

As part of the crime and disorder reduction partnerships reform programme, the Home Office and a range of stakeholders have identified what works well in partnerships and have developed the ‘hallmarks of effective partnerships’. View the report Delivering Community Safety: A guide to effective partnership working.

The Home Office crime and disorder reduction partnership mini site provides information and resources for those involved or working with crime and disorder reduction partnerships.
How healthy and well supported are people?

What’s this about?

This is about the health and well-being of adults, children and young people. Good health and well-being are important both to individuals and to wider society, in terms of improving quality and length of life, the costs of treating ill health and reduced productivity due to illness and premature death. Health and care services have a central role to play in treating and preventing ill health and ensuring well-being. However, the role other sectors can play in promoting health and well-being and reducing health, social and economic inequalities is critical. CAA will identify where local agencies are working effectively together on this agenda.

Why is it important?

Local strategic partnerships will have identified priorities from the National Indicator Set for their local area agreements reflecting health and well-being outcomes. These could include:

- all age all cause (AAAC) mortality (a particularly good proxy to measure progress in addressing health inequalities), and mortality rates for specific diseases and issues such as cancer, cardiovascular disease (CVD) and infant mortality are very important for health inequalities in spearhead areas;
- other health outcomes such as childhood obesity, smoking and over-consumption of alcohol – all of which have a major impact on health inequalities;
- access to and effectiveness of services (such as effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health services);
- a self-reported measure of people’s overall health and well-being; and
- people with long-term conditions supported to be independent and in control of their condition.

There are also indicators from other sectors that reflect the wider determinants of health, such as children living in poverty, crime, education, and the environment.

In assessing health, well-being and health inequalities and the prospects for improvement, some judgement of the effectiveness of partnership working will be important, for example:
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- Does the choice of local area agreement priorities reflect assessed need through meaningful, inclusive joint strategic needs assessment, cross-referenced with other sources, such as area health profiles?

- Were the health/social priorities jointly agreed; why were they chosen; do they address the serious issues in an area?

- Are the links between health/social care and other local area priorities recognised?

What might you look for?

A healthy area will have mortality figures (national indicators 120 -122) and under 18 conception rates (national indicator 112) below the national average and falling faster than the national trend. Beneath these headline outcomes assessors should look for evidence-based action to reduce risk factors (for example, smoking, obesity, low levels of physical activity) and to improve facilities (for example, access to services). Some evidence can be found in national indicators but you will need to seek further evidence from additional local and national data and from coherent local consultation, strategies, action plans and evaluation.

The National Indicator Set provides comparisons between areas but say nothing about health inequalities within local authority areas. Spearhead areas will be targeting improvement towards the England average, whereas other areas are likely to be addressing health inequalities within their own area. In both cases, you will need evidence that inequalities in health and care within an area are being analysed through equality impact assessment, and joint strategic needs.

You should also consider other health and health-related data, and whether any key issues are being effectively addressed through targeted action.

It will be important that any action is based on evidence of effectiveness and cost effectiveness, using national sources and local evaluation of practice. National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) recommendations and guidance from the Department of Health national support teams on health inequalities are useful sources of good practice (see links below).

Reference material and further information

View the National Institute for Health Clinical Excellence clinical guidelines.

View information on the Social Care Institute for Excellence website (SCIE) which was established by Government in 2001 to improve social care services for adults and children in the United Kingdom.

View the Department of Health – health inequalities mini site.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

View Department of Health - health improvement mini site.

View area health profiles which provide a snapshot of health for each local council in England using key health indicators, which enables comparison locally, regionally and over time.
How well is adult social care meeting people’s needs and choices?

What’s this about?

Following extensive consultation with the public, the Department of Health published in 2007 the seven outcomes that people expect from their health and adult social care services. These are used as the framework for assessing council performance in relation to adult social care:

- improved health and emotional well-being;
- improved quality of life;
- making a positive contribution;
- increased choice and control;
- freedom from discrimination and harassment;
- economic well-being; and
- maintaining personal dignity and respect.

Subsequently the government, in a concordat with key stakeholders, has identified a series of policy initiatives that it wishes all agencies to promote to transform the shape of adult social care services.

Personalisation is at the heart of the transformation agenda for adult social care. The relationship between the citizen and the state is one where citizens should be able to take control of their needs through a range of provision from which they can choose. This will change social care from a system where people have had to accept what is offered, to one where people have greater control, not only over the type of support offered, but also how and when it is offered, how it is paid for and how it helps them achieve the outcomes that are important to them. There are several ways in which needs and choice are being addressed including:

- individual budgets;
- direct payments; and
- personal budgets.

The transformation will be achieved by citizens defining their outcomes and partnerships working together to meet these requirements.

Why is it important?

The progress partners have made with implementing these changes will be integral to how well outcomes are being achieved particularly for those who find themselves most at risk of disadvantage or in vulnerable circumstances.
The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) has launched a guide that explains the adult social care personalisation agenda. *Personalisation: a rough guide*, tells the personalisation story so far - exploring what it is, where the idea came from and where it sits within wider public service reform. The guide also explains some of the basic definitions of personalisation.

**What might you look for?**

The concepts of personalisation, choice and control are central to CAA. The progress in implementing this will be a good indicator as to how far local partners have achieved good outcomes for people. However solutions to the personalisation agenda are just as likely to fall outside the traditional service boundaries in the future with health, housing, leisure and the whole range of other services working together to provide people with good outcomes. Evidence for this theme will come largely from the adult social care annual performance assessment process. This provides an assessment of how well councils with adult social care responsibility have contributed to achieving good outcomes for people.

The personalisation agenda will be evidenced by an increased and innovative use of direct payments and individual budgets. There should also be evidence that people are receiving information, assessments and reviews, enabling person centred planning. This should help people get advice and support at an early stage, preventing loss of independence and isolation, and maintaining quality of life.

There should be an ongoing transformation of traditional social care services to meet the needs of the local population and achieve good outcomes for people. Engagement with local people should be central to any changes and help people to aspire to achieving good outcomes, choice, independence and a good quality of life.

Personalisation could also be evidenced by an increasing use of grant-funded services. These are services funded by the council, often provided by the third sector, which people can access without needing to go through an assessment first.

There should be evidence of working together with partners, including the third and independent sectors, to ensure that the provision of social care is sustainable into the future and meets the needs and aspirations of the local population.

**Reference material and further information**

View the Department of Health - Information on personalisation of social care services.

View the Independence, Well Being and Choice consultation paper setting out proposals for the future direction of social care for all adults of all age groups in England.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

The *Our health, our care, our say* White Paper sets out a vision to provide people with good quality social care and NHS services in the communities where they live.

View [Putting people first](#) a shared vision and commitment to the transformation of adult social care (Concordat).

View the [Department of Health local authority circular](#) *Transforming social care* LAC (DH)(2008)1: (Local Authority Circular).

View the information on the [Annual Performance Assessment of Adult Social Care](#).
How well kept is the area?

What’s this about?

This is about the role public services can take in improving the quality of the built and natural environment in an area. Clean, well maintained streets, parks and public open spaces contribute significantly to the quality of life of local residents. If an area is well kept it will add to the attractiveness of an area, making it a more desirable place to live and work in.

Why is it important?

The quality of the local environment can have a major impact on the perception of the area among residents, businesses and visitors. These perceptions can have a strong influence on whether people choose to live in an area, businesses choose to invest in an area, and tourists choose to visit an area. All this can have a significant economic impact on an area. A poor quality local environment has been linked to increases in both crime levels and fear of crime which can further undermine local quality of life.

Tangible benefits to the economy can be achieved through improvements in public space and the built environment. Research by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment has shown that higher house prices can be directly linked to their proximity to a well maintained park.

Access to attractive parks, gardens and other public spaces provides opportunities for leisure and sport activities which can also have positive impacts on people’s health and on wider community cohesion. People are also more likely to walk and cycle rather than use a car. This will have a positive effect on health, reduce traffic noise and improve local air quality. A well kept public transport network will also encourage people out of their cars, further improving air quality and enabling other benefits.

What might you look for?

We are looking not only at the average for an area, but also the extent to which the quality of the environment varies within the area. We would expect all areas to receive appropriate services to bring them up to the level of the best. You might look for factors such as:

- street and environmental cleanliness, including issues such as littering, fly-posting, graffiti, dog fouling, fly-tipping (NI 195) and abandoned cars;
- anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the area;
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- general maintenance of houses, commercial properties and public buildings, streets and street furniture, open spaces and privately owned land, playgrounds, transport hubs, public toilets;

- maintenance of roads, pavements and verges and the wider transport infrastructure including local rail networks;

- protection and enhancement of biodiversity and green spaces; and

- efforts to change public attitudes and behaviour to improve environmental quality and improve perceptions of the local area.

You might be interested to see whether local partners work well with outside organisations to manage the local environment effectively, for example engaging with Encams on its campaigns.

Reference material and further information

View the website for cleaner safer greener communities which provides best practice examples about creating quality spaces in which people want to live and which people will respect and be proud of.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs-led national indicator guides (see especially national indicators 196, 196 and 197).

The Department of Transport Manual for Streets provides guidance for practitioners involved in the planning, design, provision and approval of new residential streets, and modifications to existing ones. It aims to increase the quality of life through good design which creates more people-orientated streets.
How environmentally sustainable is the area?

What’s this about?

This is about ensuring that each area does all it can to live within environmental limits and takes action to avoid exceeding them. Climate change and the melting of the polar ice sheets are evidence that environmental limits are already being breached. By environmental limits we mean the level at which the environment is unable to accommodate a particular activity or rate of activities without sustaining unacceptable or irreversible change.

Why is it important?

Climate change is already affecting the lives of people in England and having a disproportionate impact on deprived communities here and overseas. Severe flooding is just one example where climate change is having a dramatic impact on the quality of people’s lives: making homes uninhabitable, threatening core energy and water services, disrupting food supplies.

We rely on ecosystems that function properly to provide us with natural resources that are essential to life: air, water, soils and biological resources, such as pollination. Protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment is vital if we are to ensure its sustainability now and for future generations. Public bodies have an important role to play in setting a positive local example by acting in an environmentally sustainable manner themselves, and by, for example, agreeing spatial plans which respect environmental limits.

What might you look for?

You may want to understand whether the area has a grasp of the important global and local factors that impact on ecosystems. There are two aspects to this: mitigation through a lower environmental footprint and adapting to the changes that are already happening to the climate so that the area is more resilient in the face of more extreme weather and flooding.

Does the area know its environmental footprint and what is it doing to minimise that footprint? For example, partners in an area may make an important contribution to environmental sustainability by minimising their contribution to climate change. They may reduce consumption of goods and services and, where possible, procure those goods and services sustainably and locally. Improving energy efficiency significantly can reduce costs to public bodies as well as tackle issues such as fuel poverty. The auditors work on organisations’ use of natural resources will provide valuable evidence here.
Note that, in a way that parallels the local economy, where the public sector is a large element of the local economy it can also have a large contribution to the non-domestic environmental footprint in the area. There are a number of national initiatives that affect individual public bodies such as the Carbon Reduction Commitment or the NHS Sustainability Strategy. Such initiatives are all aimed at reducing the overall environmental impact.

You may be interested in whether an area is making its transport system more sustainable by reducing the need to travel, for example, considering how well local transport plans and local development frameworks fit together. Also, you may want to consider whether the area is promoting less environmentally damaging means of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling. This has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve local air quality and bring complementary transport and health benefits. You might want to see that an area was taking an integrated approach to local transport, and looking across themes to deliver a wide range of positive local outcomes.

You may want to see if the area is joining up its activities, and is ensuring that the way it addresses economic and social issues does not have a negative impact on environmental concerns. For example, you could look for evidence that sustainable communities are being formed, where resource use and waste production are minimised, and people can get to jobs and local services without needing a car.

You may also want to consider evidence that shows how sustainable the local economy is and to what extent economic activities impact negatively on environmental sustainability. You may want to look at how dependent the local economy is on using finite resources (for example, fishing, the motor industry or commercial aviation) or polluting industries (such as, coal and mineral extraction and waste disposal), or requires large numbers of people to commute long distances to work by car. You might also be interested to see how the local area supports any emerging environmental industries, such as renewable energy generation or production of energy efficient products.

You might be interested to see how well the local area is protecting local natural resources and ensuring the quality of air, water and soil assets. You may want to know that land and rivers and, where relevant, coasts are being managed effectively. You may also want to know that the biodiversity duty is being delivered in the area. If relevant, you may want to know if it is successfully reclaiming areas which have suffered environmental degradation in the past, for example, by planting woodland or creating lakes and water features.

You may wish to understand whether the area has anticipated how climate changes will affect it and what it has done to adapt? Examples might include anticipating higher peak Summer temperatures and ensuring vital services can still function.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

Reference material and further information

View *Securing the future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy*.

View the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs - led National Indicator guides.

View the [UK Climate Change Impacts website](#).

View the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs page on climate change and energy (including Carbon Reduction Commitment).
How strong is the local economy?

What's this about?

The economic situation is currently a major concern for local people and public services. Any local economy may be divided into three broad but interrelated sectors:

- private sector companies in a sub-region can be key to the job opportunities and prosperity of local people. The skills and aspirations of local people also help determine where businesses emerge, locate and grow;

- the public sector is a significant element of the local economy, both directly as an employer and commissioner, and through its place shaping role. The local strategic partnership brings together public bodies that regulate business, agree the area’s spatial plan, educate residents, provide benefits for the unemployed and support people into work. In some areas the public sector is the largest single employer and/or sector and may dominate the local economy; and

- the voluntary sector, whilst often small in size, is also a crucial part of the local economic picture and can be a strong link to bespoke service provision, including for communities and individuals experiencing disadvantage.

The economic downturn will affect areas’ economic expectations and plans. You will want to know if local areas understand the impact and implications of the recession on residents’ economic prospects, and on wider concerns such as land redevelopment, health, and community safety. You may be interested in how areas are reshaping their plans and developing effective responses to the current and expected implications of a slowing economy, including by identifying new skills needed, without becoming less aspirational in their thinking.

Why is it important?

The local economy is a key factor that influences most other aspects of quality of life. These wider impacts will be felt acutely in challenging economic times.

What might you look for?

You should seek to understand:

- the strength and direction of change of the local economy;

- the role and contribution of the area in the sub-regional economy;
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- the extent to which local partners understand their local economy and the issues outlined above, its opportunities for growth and the challenges faced;

- the relationship between the current and future need for skills and the training available and participants’ success rates, including for adult learning; and

- the effectiveness and appropriateness of local partners’ actions to support business, employment and access, across their range of responsibilities.

Sustainable growth is defined by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) in *Prosperous Places*, its Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration as 'Economic growth that can be sustained and is within environmental limits, but also enhances the environment and social welfare, and avoids greater extremes in future economic cycles.'

Economic strength is underpinned by a wide range of factors. Some of the issues you may wish to consider, include a local economy’s:

- recent performance and how will the current economic climate will affect it? - is it growing or experiencing decline? What have been the drivers of change? Are new firms either being started up in the area or moving in? How efficiently are local businesses using resources and how vulnerable are they to increases in the costs of resources?

- economic structure and resilience - is it self-contained or part of a larger sub-regional economy, or just a dormitory for neighbouring areas? What is the diversity of the economy? Is it dependent on a single sector or a small number of major employers? Or does it have a broader and more resilient employment base?

- ability for sustainable growth - to what extent does growth rely on finite resources such as local minerals or supplies of land, or dependence on increasingly congested transport infrastructure;

- the local residents' employment characteristics - in which geographical areas do residents work? What is the fit between new employment opportunities and the needs of local people, in terms of their skills and access to work, including transport to work? Are there any groups outside the labour market?

- prospects for growth - given the structure, geography and performance of the local economy, and the nature of the labour market, what are the expectations for local economic growth? To what extent will local residents share in this?
You may want to consider the breadth of local partners’ support to the economy across their functions. Do these responses seem reasonable in the light of economic issues identified for the area? Support might include: the economic impact of planning; arrangements and take-up for adult learning; how transport is planned and delivered; how well local businesses are regulated; the impact of public procurement; as well as activities to help people to find work.

These are examples and are not a comprehensive list. You should seek to understand local partners’ engagement with business and residents on these issues, but you need not engage directly.

Reference material and further information

View the Improvement and Development Agency economic development diagnostic tool designed to help councils fulfil their enhanced role in place shaping and promoting economic prosperity.

View Improvement and Development Agency pages on the recession that include advice and case studies of local practice.

View the government’s single portal for its response to the recession, called real help now.

View the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) monthly market research bulletins providing up to date economic and housing information.

The audit commission report. A mine of opportunities explains how local councils responded to the recession of the 1980s

The IDeA is working closely with experts in the field and with the Department for Work and Pensions and Communities and Local Government to develop a series of 'How to...' guides to help practitioners who have a role in tackling worklessness and meeting local employment outcomes

View the Audit Commission report Crunch Time? published in November 2008 which looked at the impact of the economic downturn on local government finances.

Local transport plan performance report letters. These are published letters which outline a shared view of progress on an authority’s local transport plan, agreed by the local authority and government offices in the regions.
How strong and cohesive are local communities?

What's this about?

Community cohesion is a key part of the fabric of strong and sustainable communities. Social health and social well-being are as necessary to the quality of life for citizens as economic and environmental well-being, good health and housing and community safety. Strong and cohesive communities contribute to making an area a good place to live. In a cohesive community trust and reciprocity exists within, and between, neighbourhoods and different communities. People feel included and that they belong. Strong communities are resilient and capable of playing a part in delivering solutions to meet their own needs and aspirations.

Why is it important?

If a community is weak, or if community cohesion breaks down or is low, people's quality of life is affected. Individuals may suffer from social isolation, tensions may exist between different groups and between individuals. In extreme examples this can lead to fear, suspicion and violence. Tensions can arise if local people believe that the distribution of much needed public services is unfair, or if people feel no connection to each other or where they live.

What might you look for?

You should look for evidence that local partners and organisations understand the key role they play in promoting the social health and social well-being of communities. You should look to see how well local partners understand the social needs of their local area. You should consider how well local partners address inequalities in the distribution of resources which are scarce and/or in great demand, such as, social and affordable housing. Where you find that local partners are not effectively addressing issues which could contribute to community fragmentation, you should handle these judgements sensitively in your reports.

You might also look at levels of cultural and civic participation, such as volunteering. You might consider whether there is a thriving third sector. Also you might look at how the third sector is involved as a local partner, including as a contributor to delivering shared outcomes and providing knowledge and expertise.
Reference material and further information

The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) provides a range of advice and guidance for local councils and their partners on community cohesion.

Communities and Local Government provides a range of guidance and other publications to assist local partners help develop stronger and more cohesive communities.

View information about the role of the third sector and the national survey of third sector organisations on the website of the Office of the third sector.

View the guidance on The third sector: The crucial role of the new local performance framework.

View information about national and local compacts.

A focus on strong and cohesive communities is highlighted in the government’s public service agreement target (PSA 21) which sets out a vision for cohesive, empowered and active communities.
How well is housing need met?

What’s this about?

Decent quality housing that people can afford is a universal need. It is a vital component in achieving a successful place and a good quality of life for people. No area can be deemed to be successful unless it is able to adequately house its communities both now and in the future. There are many aspects to ensuring that communities are well housed. For making an assessment we have identified four key elements which will inform judgements in all places:

- the housing market in the area and the likelihood that current plans will address any defined imbalance or mismatch between supply of housing stock, demand for it and access to it;
- the housing needs and provision for households who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, overcrowded or living in unsatisfactory housing; including site accommodation for the Gypsy and Traveller communities;
- housing conditions in all tenures including the maximisation of the use of existing stock; and
- neighbourhoods where there are areas within the locality that are fairing significantly less well on a range of socio-economic factors or where there is fear or unwillingness to live in certain areas.

In delivering their long-term ambitions for the area, as set out in the sustainable community strategy and local area agreement improvement priorities, local authorities need to plan to meet the current and future housing and support needs of residents. To do so, they need to fully understand the needs and aspirations of residents, and plan with partners how to meet future demand, reflecting demographic and economic change, by looking across all housing tenures to:

- make best use of existing stock;
- facilitate the construction of new market and social housing;
- commission housing support services; and
- facilitate effective housing and estate management.

In areas with county councils and district councils there will be a need for local authorities and partners to plan and provide for the provision of adaptations to homes and show close working between social care services and the local housing authorities.
Why is it important?

The provision of decent quality affordable housing in an area matters to many other aspects of people’s lives. It is the biggest item of expenditure in most households. Housing matters to economic development. Good housing can enhance economic performance and the competitiveness of a place. Poor housing can lead to segregation and concentrations of poverty in specific areas. Treated as an isolated issue, housing investment is unlikely to achieve sustainable growth. Housing is important to the well-being and prosperity of places in a number of ways:

- the importance of skills to places’ economic performance means that getting the right housing offer, including affordable housing, is essential to attracting and retaining a skills base that will encourage inward investment; and

- aligning strategies for housing and economic development will increase the likelihood that efforts to address deprivation will be supported by measures to address the underlying economic causes of area deprivation.

Housing is also important to individuals in many ways:

- adequate and appropriate housing is a crucial underpinning of health and well-being and in offering people in circumstances which make them vulnerable improved life chances;

- housing support services often turn people’s lives around, allowing them to live independently and enabling otherwise marginalised groups to participate fully in the social and economic life of their communities. These services help reduce re-offending, reduce homelessness and tackle worklessness and contribute to the delivery of a range of national indicators. Through preventing or delaying more costly interventions, crises are often avoided for the individual and significant costs saved to the public purse (estimated to be around £2.77 billion a year);

- a lack of affordable housing directly impacts on people’s level of disposable income and all that this entails;

- there are direct links between community safety and the design and upkeep of estates. The street scene and the cleanliness of a place are as important in residential areas as they are in other parts of a local community;

- housing is the biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in this country and is inextricably linked to targets to reduce emissions;
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- the quality of housing and the environmental aspects around this are hugely influential in community cohesion issues. There are numerous examples where community cohesion has been threatened by shortage of affordable supply; and

- poor educational performance often goes hand in hand with poor and overcrowded conditions with all the impact that has on the levels of education for the future workforce.

What might you look for?

You should consider whether partnerships are taking a strategic approach to assessing current and future housing need, reflecting demographic changes and local economic conditions, looking across all housing sectors, and working with a range of partners, across boundaries to facilitate the delivery of those needs.

The housing vision for an area should be integral to wider plans for creating sustainable communities and reflect the new structure of accountability which will impact upon the strategic housing role. Recognising the current difficult housing market conditions, are local partners doing all they can to mitigate the current climate in meeting housing needs? Strategies need to address the needs of all sectors of society, both current and future.

You might look to see whether coherent plans seek to improve or maintain the quality of conditions in both public and private sectors. There is recognition here that the worst housing conditions are invariably found in the private rented sector along with concentrations of vulnerable households.

You might look to see that strategies and plans do include arrangements to lift the most deprived areas in the community recognising that changes do not occur overnight in such areas. You should consider whether the strategies and actions proposed for these areas are going to result in significant improvements on a range of liveability factors that will result in improved life prospects for local residents.

Sources of evidence

The following list provides examples of potential sources of evidence. The list is not exhaustive and you may draw on other sources of evidence, reflecting local circumstances, to support your judgements:

- local authority returns to government, for example, P1E forms on homelessness provisions and the housing strategy statistical appendix;

- data available from relevant national indicators and other initiatives such as Supporting People Outcomes data;
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- local authority housing and homelessness strategies, joint strategic needs assessments; private sector renewal strategies and strategic housing market assessments;
- stock condition surveys; and
- Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessments.
How well are families supported?

What’s this about?

This section relates to the local area’s promotion of community cohesion and sustainable communities. Firstly, by assessing whether there is equality of access across the range of provision and support and secondly, to ensure that there is better care for all and to tackle poverty. The support provided to families plays a key role in testing the local partner’s commitment for meeting these targets.

Why is it important?

Families can experience support and guidance from a range of services in a local area and this can be ineffective if there is insufficient integration. It is important that families experience a ‘joined up approach’ which will help them to receive appropriate support speedily and without recourse to competing bureaucratic systems. For example, families who need support for a child with learning difficulties and disabilities can experience support both from special educational needs (SEN) and the disabilities team within the care services as well as specialist support from health services. These services might operate with differing thresholds and processes which can prove difficult for parents to navigate and cope with. They may also fail to communicate effectively with each other.

What might you look for?

The following are helpful pointers to effective practice:

- early intervention and the timeliness of support;
- the ease of access to services and availability of emergency help, for example respite care;
- the quality and availability of pre-school settings;
- the availability of self-directed support and support for vulnerable groups;
- the quality of pre-school care;
- support for young carers;
- the quality and access to respite care;
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

- the quality of advice and information. Does it help families to know where they should go to for advice? For example, it is important that leisure activities for young people with disabilities are clearly signposted;

- community cohesion;

- childcare – access and quality;

- family learning and parenting;

- whether decisions about housing families take accessibility to appropriate schools into account;

- the extent to which children’s services, including schools, engage effectively with parents;

- the extent to which parents and carers are encouraged to take up their benefit entitlements; and

- the extent to which action is taken to develop the local economy and address issues around family poverty.
How good is the well-being of children and young people?

What’s this about?

Ofsted continues to have statutory responsibilities for assessing performance of children and young people’s services and will draw on a range of evidence as the basis for assessing local outcomes for children and young people. The emphasis of CAA is on the future prospects for an area; and the well-being of children and young people is key to the future.

Why is it important?

Ofsted will organise their assessment of children’s well-being in the area assessment around the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The five Every Child Matters outcomes originate from the 2004 Children Act and areas are required to work together, including through children’s trusts, to promote:

**being healthy**, including so that children and young people are physically healthy; mentally and emotionally healthy; sexually healthy; have healthy lifestyles; choose not to take illegal drugs;

**staying safe**, including so that children and young people are safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation; safe from accidental injury and death; safe from bullying and discrimination; safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school; have security and stability and are cared for;

**enjoying and achieving**, including so that children and young people are ready for school; attend and enjoy school; achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school; achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation; achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school;

**making a positive contribution**, including so that children and young people: engage in decision-making and support the community and environment; engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school; develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate; develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges; develop enterprising behaviour; and

**achieving economic well-being**, including so that children and young people engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school; are ready for employment; live in decent homes and sustainable communities; have access to transport and material goods; live in households free from low income.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

A key consideration in assessing how well services for children and young people work together will be their impact on improving outcomes for children and young people, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

All agencies have a role to play in this and, in particular, all agencies have a responsibility to keep children safe and healthy, including the police and health service.

In making this assessment, you will need to reflect this across the other relevant themes. For example, if large numbers of children and young people are not engaged in education, learning and training this may adversely affect the local economy.

What might you look for?

Ofsted will provide a new performance rating for services and outcomes for children and young people, which will be updated quarterly. It will include summary findings of inspection and regulation across all its remits and an analysis of Every Child Matters indicators. Ofsted will use this profile to arrive at the annual rating of children’s services. It will also be used to contribute to the area assessment. In addition you will need to evaluate how well partnerships are improving outcomes, including in the ways set out below.

Promoting healthy lifestyles for children and young people by, for example:

- promoting sexual health, reducing incidence of teenage pregnancy, preventing them from taking illegal drugs; and
- ensuring that children and young people with mental health problems have access to services, and that their additional needs are supported in schools.

Ensuring that proper support is provided to protect children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect by, for example,

- ensuring children and young people are safe from bullying, discrimination and anti-social behaviour in schools and within the wider community; and
- social care services and other agencies share information and work to minimise the risks to vulnerable children.

Contributing to raised standards and improved performance, through, for example:

- high quality early years education and effective monitoring, challenge and support for schools, and ensuring the success of pupil referral units; and
ensuring sufficient school places and robust admission arrangements through, for example, a consideration of vulnerable children and young people and those who do not attend school.

**Involving children and young people in making key decisions about their future, in the council’s decision making and in enterprising and positive behaviour, for example:**

- is it clear that children and young people are consulted on key decisions which affect them? This could be at an individual level such as a contribution to a care plan review. It could also mean the effectiveness of participation for young people; and

- have the views and opinions of children and young people helped to shape and make a discernible difference to services?

**Supporting the preparation of young people for employment and helping to ensure that they engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school by, for example:**

- ensuring that community regeneration strategies take proper account of the needs of children and young people; and

- promoting increased social and educational inclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups such as looked after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Through, for example, high quality preventative and support services, early identification and assessment of need and smooth transition to adult services.

**Reference material and further information**

View the [Ofsted website](#).

View the [Every Child Matters home page](#).

View the [Every Child Matters outcomes framework](#).

View [Youth Matters: Improving outcomes for 13-19 year olds](#).

View the guidance for the [Children and Young People’s plan](#).

View the green paper on [Care Matters Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care](#).

View the [Child poverty toolkit](#).

View the [Audit Commission school survey](#).
How good is the well-being of older people?

While this isn’t a specific theme for the area assessment, this heading may be a useful lens to look through given that most localities are considering the implications of higher percentages of the local population being 50 or over.

What’s this about?

In 2009, 34 per cent of the population will be 50 or over. This will increase to 40 per cent by 2029. Population ageing affects all areas, but its impact will be experienced differently. In some areas most residents are already over 50 – for example, in West Somerset 53 per cent are over 50, rising to 63 per cent by 2029. Even in those areas with relatively small older populations, typically inner city areas, older people still need to be considered, not least because they are more likely to be a diverse population, to be living in poverty, to be experiencing poor health and to be socially isolated.

Why is it important?

While only about 15 per cent of older people are likely to need support from care services older people may rely on services such as transport, learning and leisure to maintain their independence, health and well-being. So all public services need to review what they do in the light of this change in the balance of the population. Partnerships should make sure that their area offers an environment in which people can age well. The Commission’s recent study *Don’t Stop Me Now* looks in detail at what this means for different types of area.

The Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit is working with the Department of Work and Pensions and the Department of Health to refresh the national strategy on ageing, *Opportunity Age*, so the issue is rising up the policy agenda.

What might you look for?

*Don’t Stop Me Now* identified four important levels of activity, and includes case studies that relate to each of these:

- engaging with older people;
- age-proofing all public services;
- delivering services to promote independence; and
- delivering good quality health and social care.

You should look for evidence of activity at all of these levels.
The later life public service agreement indicator (PSA 17) takes a broad approach to tackling poverty and promoting independence and well-being in later life. The National Indicator Set contains three national indicators that fall within PSA 17.

Don’t Stop Me Now found that only about one third of councils are prepared for an ageing society, while a third are at an early stage, and the remainder tend to deal with older people primarily as users of care services. The areas that were doing well on this agenda, were engaging with older people in a systematic way on a wide range of issues, and could show that they had a strategic approach to older people and population ageing that involved many different services (such as community safety, leisure and transport). They could show that their approach was already making a difference.

Reference material and further information

View the Audit Commission report Don’t Stop Me Now that looks at the challenges and opportunities facing England as its population gets older. It aims to help local public services adapt to the needs of an older and more diverse society, and identifies solutions that can be implemented quickly, as well as exploring how councils should plan strategically for the wider challenges ahead.
Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities of the CAA inspectorates

Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent public body responsible for ensuring public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve high-quality local and national services for the public in England. It is sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health.

It aims to support the improvement of public services, from the perspective of the user, through a wide range of activities including external audit, inspection of local authority services and evidence-based research.

The Audit Commission employs around 2100 staff working across local government; health; housing; community safety; and fire and rescue services.

Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission was established by the Health and Social Care Act 2008 to regulate the quality of health and social care and look after the interests of people detained under the Mental Health Act.

It brings together the work of the Commission for Social Care Inspection, the Healthcare Commission, and the Mental Health Act Commission. The new organisation will have around 2,500 staff with offices in London and across the English regions.

The Care Quality Commission became a legal entity in October 2008 and takes up its responsibilities for the quality of health and social care from April 2009.

The Care Quality Commission will regulate and improve the quality of health and social care and look after the interests of people detained under the Mental Health Act. Its work, bringing together regulation of the quality of health and adult social care for the first time, will touch the lives of almost everyone in England.
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (HMIC)

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Home Secretary and report to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, who is the Home Secretary's principal professional policing adviser.

HMIC is independent both of the Home Office and of the Police Service.

There are currently four HMIC regional offices in Wakefield, Bromsgrove, London, and Woking, each managed by an HMI and staffed by a small number of lead staff officers.

The vision of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary involves inspecting in the public interest in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Policing Green Paper Policing our Communities: From the national to the neighbourhood shifted the responsibility for assessing the performance of police forces from the Home Office to HMIC, enhancing the independence of HMIC by tasking it as a ‘fierce advocate and more explicit guarantor of the public interest’. The Green Paper also gave HMIC the responsibility for carrying out inspections of police authorities, jointly with the Audit Commission.

HMI Prisons

HMI Prisons is responsible for the regular independent inspection of the treatment and conditions of detainees in 140 prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales, police custody cells, 10 immigration removal centres and 30 immigration short-term holding facilities in the United Kingdom, and immigration escorts. All inspections are carried out jointly with Ofsted, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, the Dental Practice Division of the NHS Business Services Agency and the Care Quality Commission. HMI Prisons also inspects offender management in custody jointly with HMI Probation, military custody at the invitation of the Ministry of Defence and police custody jointly with HMI Constabulary. HMI Prisons is the gatekeeper for inspection of all these settings under the Police and Justice Act 2006.
CAA guidance for inspectorate staff

All the prisons, institutions, centres and facilities which HMI Prisons inspect are nationally managed and are not formally linked to local authority or regional structures. Local authorities will have a role in providing certain services, for example children's safeguarding arrangements or resettlement facilities, but many - often most - detainees will have no link with the authorities in the area where the institution is located. Health services in prisons, however, are commissioned by the Primary Care Trust irrespective of the home location of those in custody and are assessed by the Care Quality Commission alongside HMI Prisons.

HMI Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation is an independent Inspectorate funded by the Ministry of Justice. It reports directly to the Secretary of State on the effectiveness of work with individual offenders and children and young people to reduce re-offending and protect the public. It provides advice and disseminates good practice to ministers, officials, managers and practitioners, especially about public protection, based on inspection findings. It contributes to the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system, particularly through joint work with other inspectorates.

Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects registered childcare and children’s social care, including adoption and fostering agencies, residential schools, family centres and homes for children. It also inspects all state maintained schools, some independent schools, pupil referral units, further education, initial teacher education, and publicly funded adult skills and employment-based training, the Children and Family Courts Advisory Service (Cafcass), and the overall quality of services for children in local authority areas.

Fire and Rescue Service

The Audit Commission: under the Local Government Act 1999 and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 the Commission has powers to inspect an fire and rescue authority’s compliance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework as well as its performance more generally.

In May 2007, the Department for Communities and Local Government announced the creation of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit. Its responsibilities include some of the existing function of Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire Services (HMFSI). It has also taken responsibility for the design and administration of a new Operational Assessment of Service Delivery toolkit.

The Health and Safety Executive has wide ranging legal powers to undertake inspections and issue improvement notices on fire and rescue services. The increasing number of fire fighter deaths has attracted a high level of national concern and the Health and Safety Executive is aiming to carry out approximately seven health and safety inspections of fire and rescue authorities a year.