

# Comprehensive Area Assessment

A guide for the police



‘As a police officer, one of the things that excites me about CAA is that it looks at the links between everyone involved in community safety locally and holds us collectively to account.’

**Tony Eastaugh, former Borough Commander, Barking & Dagenham**

‘CAA will help people to make informed choices and to influence local decisions. It will be a catalyst for improvement, better outcomes, more effective partnership working, more responsive services and better value for money.’

**Denis O’Connor, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary**

‘CAA focuses on how well different public bodies work together to improve local quality of life. It’s based on the judgement of different inspectorates working in partnership. We are striving to make CAA the most user-friendly public service reporting system to date.’

**Steve Bundred, Chief Executive, Audit Commission**

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# What is Comprehensive Area Assessment?

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Comprehensive Area Assessment, or CAA, is a new way of assessing local public services in England. It examines how well councils and other public bodies work together to meet the needs of the people they serve.

For the first time, six independent inspectorates will collectively assess services. We are asking: what do local people need and want, are they getting it, and what are the prospects for things to get better?

CAA focuses on what people, local leaders and service chiefs have identified as the priorities for particular places. They might include the quality of healthcare, the recession, affordable housing, children's well-being, community safety, achievement in schools or the quality of the local environment. We will use green flags to reflect exceptional performance or outstanding improvement, resulting in sustainably better outcomes, and from which others can learn. We will use red flags where we have significant concerns about outcomes and prospects, where something more or different needs to be done.

We'll offer these assessments, online and through other media. They will make for an evolving picture of local life. First results will be available on 10 December 2009 on a new website called Oneplace - [www.direct.gov.uk/oneplace](http://www.direct.gov.uk/oneplace)

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# Why is it important?

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CAA aims to offer benefits for everyone.

- **The public** have a right to know whether they are getting value for money, and whether promised improvements are taking place. CAA gives clear and impartial information, and will help people decide, for example, about how they use public services.
- We report back to **public bodies** on their own performance. As well as pointing out where things need to change, CAA highlights achievements and innovation that public bodies in other places can learn from.
- CAA assures **government** that taxpayers' money is well spent and provides independent evidence about how well areas are progressing against national and local priorities.

## How is it different from what's gone before?

In the past we measured police and community safety partners' performance through individual service inspections such as Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for councils and the Police Performance and Assessment Framework (PPAF). Other local public services were assessed only by their relevant inspectorates.

The new approach is very different.

**It's more wide-ranging:** CAA is looking at how the police, probation and prison services, health trusts and councils are working together – the joint goal being a better quality of life locally.

**It focuses on results:** Rather than examining structures and processes, CAA looks at outcomes. Are services making a difference; are they helping improve people's lives?

**It assesses local priorities:** CAA focuses on what's important to each local area – and that will vary. Do service providers understand what touches the lives of residents – and what the people who live there say matters to them? How are councils and trusts and the police collaborating on the long-term problems of this or that place?

**It's forward-looking:** Instead of talking about how things were done, CAA reports on what's happening now and on what needs to alter if the lives of citizens are to improve in the future.

**It's a joint assessment:** Through CAA, inspectorates are pooling their knowledge of how well services deliver for their communities.

The new CAA framework is designed to rationalise inspection processes and aims to reduce the amount of regular inspection. There are fewer programmes of intensive inspection. Instead, regular dialogue between the inspectorates and local organisations, and an analysis of information that organisations already produce to manage their services, form the basis of our assessments.

### **Who is involved?**

Six different inspectorates are coordinating an overview of public services in every area of England. They are the Audit Commission, the Care Quality Commission, HM Inspectorates of Constabulary, Prisons and Probation, and Ofsted. Each inspectorate draws on evidence from its own inspectors, outside specialists and those who know an area well, including councillors.

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# What do CAA assessments look like?

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CAA has two parts: we assess the area while also checking and reporting on the organisations providing public services within it.

In the area assessment the inspectorates jointly judge how well public services are meeting the priorities that have been set locally – and whether improvement is likely to continue. The organisational assessment examines performance and value for money in councils and primary care trusts, police and other bodies, and how well they are cooperating with one another. The Audit Commission coordinates organisational assessments of councils and fire and rescue services. The other inspectorates report separately – so, for example, the rounded assessments of police force performance and inspections of police authorities by HMIC and the Audit Commission will inform the area assessment in future years (the results will not be known in time for reporting CAA in year one in December 2009).

We measure how each area performs using national and local information that is already available. We look at local area agreements, sustainable communities strategies, the national indicators set by central government and, as a source of data on opinion and attitudes, the government's Place Survey. We also look at information produced by councils, the police, primary care trusts and other local organisations to manage their own performance.

By bringing together assessments of place and of organisations, we're able to judge how well public services are tackling an area's problems and priorities.

You can see an example of what an area assessment will look like at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/oneplace](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/oneplace)

And you can find out more detail about CAA by visiting our dedicated web pages on [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa)

### **How CAA will work with the police**

CAA looks at the links between all those involved in improving community safety locally, and holds them collectively to account. There is real value for all partners as CAA provides a shared analysis that shows how partners can support one another. The police can use CAA to work more effectively with their local partners.

CAA will help partners to understand the expectations and limitations of the police service. It can help the police to better understand its role in issues that affect its work, but are not seen as part of mainstream policing, such as tackling the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

CAA also points to work carried out by the police which helps the partnership as a whole get results.

CAA will allow inspectorates and practitioners to form an overall view about how well local bodies understand the community safety needs of local people, and how well these needs are being translated into improvements in community safety in the area. While our assessments concentrate on the area covered by the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement, we can also consider community safety outcomes at Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Basic Command Unit and neighbourhood levels.

For the public, the often confusing picture of several reports by different agencies will be replaced by a clear shared account of the prospects for quality of life in their area.

## CAA and improvement

Improvement activity may result from CAA at any time through the year but will ordinarily be triggered by the reporting of a red flag. Improvement activity might include support from the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPS), support from peers or, in the case of policing issues, from the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA). Inspection by one or more of the inspectorates will also be considered but only undertaken where appropriate.

## CAA and other police service assessments

CAA does not require the police to undertake extra reporting or information gathering. In considering the evidence about 'how safe is the area?', we will consider the HMIC rounded assessment of police forces and the inspections of police authorities undertaken jointly by HMIC and the Audit Commission when they both become available.

In this first year, we will have considered evidence from HMIC including professional judgement of analysis of Basic Command Unit performance, and the results of any recently undertaken inspection. HMIC will continue to deliver programmed inspections in all police forces in England, the results of which will continue to inform CAA.

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# Your questions answered

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## **How does CAA recognise the important contribution the police service makes to improving quality of life in an area?**

CAA recognises that improving community safety is a partnership responsibility. Assessments consider the contribution of all partners in meeting objectives, because we're concerned with results.

CAA illuminates the important links between different partnership activities, both positive and negative. For example, a council's offer of free swims for young people during the school holidays can help cut crime and anti-social behaviour and improve health and fitness. Another example is how the police's work to combat domestic violence also reduces pressure on health services.

In this way it shows not only the police's contribution to quality of life issues, but also shows how other partners are supporting the police on issues traditionally seen as police matters.

## **How will CAA contribute to community safety?**

CAA has been developed to reflect changes in how local services are delivered. Local services are encouraged to deliver more responsive and personalised services – that is, services built around the needs of individuals, families and communities, not around institutional boundaries. So CAA recognises that the police cannot address community safety issues in isolation and therefore looks at these issues in a wider social context.

Coordinated local action is essential if we are to successfully promote community safety. CAA aims to make sure that the needs of the local population are met through agencies working seamlessly together to deliver better results. CAA will shine a spotlight on how well local partners are working together to tackle local priorities.

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# Your questions answered

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## **What happens if a community safety issue gets a red flag? Won't that be seen as a mark against the police service?**

We give red flags where we have significant concerns about outcomes and prospects, where more needs to be done or things need to be done differently. Flags will be given to partnerships as a whole, not to individual services.

## **Can we afford CAA, given the country is in recession?**

CAA should save money. Organisations that work more closely together duplicate less and so should cut costs. With local public services costing more than £200 billion a year, CAA is casting light on where the money is well – or not so well – spent. And with central government requiring 3 per cent efficiency savings a year, the search for value is more critical than ever. By joining forces we reduce the administrative impact of our assessments, allowing councils, trusts and schools to concentrate on service priorities.

## **Why will it matter to the public?**

Increasingly, citizens expect direct access to information about services. CAA information will be readily available and independent. It will strengthen citizens' capacity to challenge and to influence services. Because CAA looks at what matters most to people in their area, reports should have a ready-made audience.

We are writing assessments in straightforward, jargon-free language. Online reporting will make it easy to find data about the local area – and we'll provide alternatives for citizens not online.

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# CAA in practice

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## Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour

Concerns about safety are always high on the public's list of concerns. While police are clearly in the frontline, crime and anti-social behaviour can only be cut if all local partners play their part.

For example, is the council, perhaps with voluntary organisations, running schemes to keep young people occupied after school and during school holidays? Are schools doing enough to encourage pupils to respect their areas? Are local businesses offering training and apprenticeships? Is the primary care trust being effective in persuading young people of the health risks of drugs and alcohol? And are the police locally being creative about preventing crime – for example, equipping officers to talk confidently and knowledgeably to young people of all backgrounds on the street?

To make sensible judgements, especially on prospects for the future, area assessments will look at how all partners contribute to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour – individually and together. Assessors want to know whether local partnerships are using evidence of schemes that are known to work.

## Information about the other partner inspectorates can be found at:

Care Quality Commission

[www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

Ofsted

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary

<http://www.inspectorates.justice.gov.uk/hmic/>

HM Inspectorate of Prisons

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/inspectorates/hmi-prisons/>

HM Inspectorate of Probation

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/inspectorates/hmi-probation/>

## CAA timetable

**Summer 2009:** CAA leads and other inspectorate staff worked with local partnerships to identify how effectively you're meeting local priorities.

**September/October 2009:** CAA final assessments for 2009 shared with local partners. There will be a period of review before publication where significant disagreements about red flags or organisational assessment scored judgements will be resolved.

**Early November:** Resolve any remaining reviews.

**10 December:** Launch of public Oneplace website. First set of CAA reports published.

**Early 2010:** We will publish themed reports on what we have learned from the first round of CAA.

## Where to find out more

Go to the Audit Commission website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa) to find out more about CAA. You can view an example area assessment and see how members of the public will be able to access information online about their local area.



for an independent overview  
of local public services

From 10 December 2009 you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - [www.direct.gov.uk/oneplace](http://www.direct.gov.uk/oneplace)

For more information now, go to [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/oneplace](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/oneplace)

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