

Comprehensive Area Assessment – update on latest developments

1. Summary

This report updates members on the publication of the final joint Inspectorate framework for CAA. While we have worked hard to influence the final framework, and with some success, it is recognised that there is still more to be done before CAA is able to deliver the vision. This paper outlines where changes have been made to the framework, but also sets out suggested future activity to both influence how CAA develops and in providing support to councils and partners.

2. Recommendations

- To note the publication of the final CAA Framework
- To agree the suggested next steps set out at paragraph 5.

3. Action

- Pursue the next steps as agreed by members.

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Background

1. The joint Inspectorate proposals for CAA were finally published on 10 February following a length period of development. CAA replaces CPA from April this year and the first assessments will be published in November. CAA will provide an assessment of how well people are being served by their local public services to achieve improvement and progress towards long term goals. It focuses on councils and partners' ability to deliver sustainable improvements in the area i.e. it focuses on outcomes, not organisations, and is forward, not backward looking. A copy of the LGA's "On the day" Briefing is available on the LGA website (<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=1592408>). This paper outlines where changes have been made to the framework and suggests future activity to influence how CAA develops and support to councils and partners.
2. The LGA, with IDeA, has worked hard to influence the CAA framework, including working closely with councils in the ten areas where CAA has been trialled to produce the sector's own evaluation of CAA. A number of elements are consistent with what has been lobbied for, for example
 - A streamlined assessment with just two assessments – the area and organisational assessment;
 - Area assessment – taking local priorities as the starting point for the assessment as opposed to the originally proposed national standard list; confirmation that the inspectorates do not see it as part of their role to challenge local political choice; focusing on the third question – the prospects for improvement;
 - Organisational assessment – scope of the Use of Resources assessment slimmed down from earlier proposals;
 - Evidence – as far as is possible drawing on evidence available nationally and that used locally in order to avoid making extra demands on local services; only undertake additional investigation where needed to make robust assessments;
 - Two tier areas – confirmation that the inspectorates will reflect district councils' contribution to local outcomes in the area assessments as well as taking them into account in the organisational assessments for district councils;
 - Self assessment – whilst not requiring a new self assessment, support for the IDeA/LGA approach;
 - Proportionality – confirmation that high performing organisations and partnerships delivering improvements will receive less inspection;

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- Inspection – confirmation that under CAA inspection will be more risk-based and tailored to local circumstances so that inspection has greater impact where it is most needed;
 - Peer involvement – confirmation that “experts by experience” and peers will be involved in order to aid the transparency and credibility of the joint inspectorate quality assurance arrangements;
 - Public reporting – area assessment to be reported as a narrative and not scored; confirmation that the Inspectorates do not envisage reporting a large number of red or green flags for any area.
3. **Influencing the CAA Guidance.** The Inspectorates will publish guidance to inspectorate staff involved in CAA by 31st March. We have had a number of discussions with Audit Commission and councils in order to influence the guidance so that it provides for stronger member involvement in CAA; provides assurances that the evidence on which assessments are made will be shared; provides for member peer engagement in the assessment process itself (as well as quality assurance). Cllr David Parsons has written to Michael O’Higgins, Chairman, Audit Commission about this and further proposals about peer engagement will be put to the Audit Commission following the workshop on 9 March.
4. Now that the CAA Framework has been published one of the key issues for the LGA will be to ensure that the ambition and commitments in the Framework document are actually delivered and reflect councils’ experience of CAA. This was the subject of letters from Cllr Margaret Eaton to Hazel Blears MP and from Cllr David Parsons to the Inspectorates shortly after the publication of the CAA framework clearly setting out councils’ expectations that CAA will deliver a reduction in the burden of assessment and inspection and that in future any remaining inspection activity would be properly targeted and managed across the inspectorates. These issues can also be pursued at the forthcoming Board Away Day.
5. **Proposed next steps:** It is suggested that the our future activity be focussed around the following six objectives:
- i. **Providing effective support to councils:** In one sense the best preparation for CAA is for councils and local partners to deliver their priorities. However CAA is different to CPA and there are a number of potential support needs. A note of IDeA support on CAA is **attached at Annex A**. In addition IDeA has led the development of a new approach to local self-evaluation and peer challenge which enables councils and partners to improve how they are working together to achieve local outcomes and tell their own story of improvement. More information is available on the IDeA website (<http://www.idea.gov.uk>).
 - ii. **Monitoring councils’ experience of CAA in year 1 (“CAA watch”):** It will be important for the LGA to monitor councils’ experience of CAA to ensure that it

delivers the intentions in the framework/guidance so that we can take up concerns during the year and are well placed to influence the way CAA develops in year 2. We are currently exploring ways of achieving this, including the idea of identifying a representative group of councils we can meet with on a quarterly basis during the year (coinciding with Inspectorates discussions with councils and their partners locally). The intelligence gained can then feed into our regular senior member Liaison meetings with the Audit Commission, feed into the Inspectorates evaluation and inform IDeA support.

iii. Maintaining pressure on the Inspectorates to align Performance

Frameworks: It is important that CAA and the key performance frameworks that will work alongside and contribute to CAA (Children and young people; adult social care; police and community safety) collectively provide a coherent, joined up and locally flexible assessment. LGA should continue to influence the frameworks as they develop, monitor councils' experience, and maintain pressure on the Inspectorates and Government Departments as necessary.

iv. Assessing the extent to which CAA delivers a reduction in the burden of assessment and inspection: It is suggested that the LGA commission some robust independent research to measure the inspection and assessment burden on councils during the first year of CAA. The results would help inform lobbying on reducing the burden of CAA and future discussions about the shape of CAA in year 2 and beyond.

v. Ensuring a strong sector input to the joint Inspectorate evaluation of CAA:

The Inspectorates have confirmed their intention to commission a formal evaluation of CAA – focussing on the CAA process itself; the impact CAA has on local public bodies and its eventual impact on the quality of public services. It will be essential that this is informed by a strong input from councils. We are in discussion with the Commission about how they think this can best be achieved, but our primary responsibility will be to ensure the views of councils come through loud and clear.

vi. Influencing the future of public services regulation: We will bring forward proposals, developed in conjunction with political groups within the LGA as appropriate, that could be used to influence the direction of future policy on the basis of councils' experience and practice.

Financial Implications

6. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

Implications for Wales

7. There is a different approach to performance management in Wales.

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APPENDIX A

SUPPORT FOR CAA

This paper updates the Improvement Board on the IDeA's work to support councils and their partners in their response to CAA. Broadly there are two main areas where councils and partners are seeking support:

- A) Working within the transition from CPA to CAA so that they can understand the framework and how best to utilise it on their own improvement needs.
- B) Supporting councils and partners to achieve local outcomes.

This programme of support has been developed in consultation with Regional Associates and National and Regional Lead Member Peers. Member peers have a vital role in delivering IDeA support so that members can discuss things 'member to member'. A CAA workshop session is being arranged for member peers so that they are fully up to speed to with the framework and can share emerging issues to support their work in the regions.

It is also important to note the connections with other programmes of support activity. A number of these are highlighted in section C, at the end of this paper.

A) THE TRANSITION FROM CPA TO CAA

Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) Conferences

IDeA has worked with RIEPs in delivering sessions and conferences on CAA. Most regions have now had their own CAA conference, tailored to local needs. There is also scope to supplement these with a series of regional events, specifically for members. LGA and IDeA are putting together proposals for discussion with RIEPs.

Leadership Academy

The Leadership Academy is the programme for councillors in leadership positions. Many programme cohorts have already requested modules on CAA. Future dates are 25th June 2009, 27th June 2009, 14th July 2009 and Leadership Academy Summer School - 5 and 6th August. The sessions will be led by a member peer with support from an IDeA facilitator.

Local Sessions

IDeA has supported a range of CAA awareness sessions with members and partnerships. These are tailored to specific needs.

Regional Event in North of England

IDeA is organising a regional event in the north of England on 24 April to share learning across the region. The event will be targeted at elected members and partners.

This is part of a pilot project in the North of England, overseen by a steering group including Cllr Steve Houghton and Carole Hudson, Chief Executive of St Helens. The outputs will

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include a series of development materials that will be available more widely (including IDeA website) following testing with members and partners in North Yorkshire and Rochdale.

B) SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE LOCAL OUTCOMES

Locality Self Evaluation

We have developed an approach to locality self evaluation, working with 14 councils (Unitary, District and County) and local strategic partnerships to take stock of where they are and to initiate action where required. The approach is supported by the inspectorates and developed within the overall context of CAA. More importantly, it is an improvement tool in its own right and the positive feedback from councils has supported this. The approach is supported by Regional Improvement Partnerships. There has already been a very positive response from councils undertaking self evaluation as part of their partnership working. For more information on locality self evaluation and to read about the stories of those that trialled it go to <http://www.idea.gov.uk/caa>

Self Evaluation Peer challenge

Building on the successful track record of peer review, and in keeping with the principles of sector-led support, the IDeA has developed a new approach to peer challenge focused on a partnership's locality self-evaluation. We have designed and tested this with two councils (Trafford and Stockport) and their LSPs.

In each case we tailor our approach to respond to partnership's specific requirements. Typically the objectives might be to:

- examine the robustness of their self-evaluation
- assess the delivery of outcomes for the community across themes – identified by the partnership itself
- assess the effectiveness of the partnership to deliver outcomes and identify future risks
- test the effectiveness of the partnership's future plans and support next steps.

Peer challenge involves a team of peers, including member and officer peers, together with partnership peers, which reflects the issues and concerns the partnership is seeking to examine.

Organisation Assessment Peer Challenge

IDeA has also developed and tested a new approach to organisation assessment peer challenge. This was successfully piloted in Herefordshire and Coventry.

Guidance/Toolkit for Scrutiny Members

Work is underway with Centre for Public Scrutiny on a guidance pack re: CAA and on scrutiny of the locality self evaluation. This is being developed in consultation with a range of members and will be published shortly.

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Outcomes-Based Accountability

Outcomes-based accountability (OBA) is a methodology developed by Mark Friedman in the United States and more recently adopted in the UK. It provides a set of tools and techniques to help partnerships to achieve better outcomes for local people. The IDeA has a number of trained facilitators who support partnerships to use this approach to tackle issues within their partnerships.

C) CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITY

Links are also made with other areas of IDeA support e.g. Local Area Agreements, support around safeguarding for children and adults. It also links with the consultation paper on sector led help. (Covered at item 1 on this agenda.)