

Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

Summary

This report updates members about the publication of the CAA results in December, invites members' views on the joint Inspectorate consultation paper on triggered inspection, and informs members about sector support arrangements.

Ian Hickman, Director, Local Government and Fire at the Audit Commission will attend the meeting to demonstrate the new joint Inspectorate Oneplace website and discuss the Commission's thinking about CAA for year 2.

Recommendations

That the report be noted.

That members agree the proposed headline comments on the joint Inspectorate consultation on triggered inspection and authorise lead members to agree any final comments.

Action

Develop LGA response to the joint Inspectorate consultation on triggered inspection in the light of members' views and secure lead member approval.

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Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

Background

1. This report updates members about the publication of the CAA results in December; invites members' views on the joint Inspectorate consultation paper on triggered inspection and informs members about sector support arrangements.

CAA results

2. The first set of CAA results was published in December through the new joint Inspectorate Oneplace website which is available at <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk> Ian Hickman, Director, Local Government and Fire at the Audit Commission will attend the meeting to demonstrate the new joint Inspectorate Oneplace website

3. From the 152 **Area Assessments** there are 62 Red flags and 74 Green flags. Common issues for red flags were - Housing; Crime; Health inequalities; Protecting vulnerable people; Cohesion; Local economy; Disadvantaged localities. Common issues for green flags were Waste and recycling; Environment and climate change; Recession and economy; Older people.

4. As regards the **Organisational Assessment** - this was scored on a scale 1 - 4. The results for councils and fire and rescue authorities are:

- 4 - performs excellently - 15 (4%)
- 3 - performs well - 213 (54%)
- 2 - performs adequately - 151 (39%)
- 1 - performs poorly - 12 (3%)

The majority of councils scoring 1 are shire districts.

CAA: Year 2

5. As previously agreed we have repeated the CAA watch survey of member authorities' views on CAA and invited views from Leaders. The results confirm earlier feedback from the sector. Along with members' views about how CAA should operate in year 2, discussed at the last meeting of the Board, the survey results are being brought together in a sector evaluation of the first year of CAA. Subject to the approval of lead members, this evaluation will be published on 26 January.

Triggered Inspection

6. The White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" indicated that there would be few automatic rolling programmes of inspection in the future, but that they might be needed in situations where the protection of particularly vulnerable groups, such as children in care, cannot be assured without some regular on-the-ground review, or where inspection is a means of driving system-change. The only rolling

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programmes agreed to date are around safeguarding services for children and youth offending teams. Any additional inspection would be determined by the inspectorates primarily on the basis of risk.

7. The inspectorates set out their proposed approach to risk-triggered inspection in the final CAA framework document but have now issued a more detailed consultation paper, copy **attached**.

In summary the paper:

- Rehearses the circumstances in which the Inspectorates would consider carrying out a triggered inspection (para 11);
- Indicates that inspection would be tailored to the nature of the performance issues that have triggered it; (para 16);
- Notice periods may vary but in most cases organisations will be given 4 weeks notice before the start of any fieldwork (para 20);
- There will normally be two judgements
 - How well are priority services, outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
 - How strong is the capacity to improve?
- Judgements will be scored, using the existing 4 point scale (para 22);
- A formal review procedure will be developed (paras 26/27).

The deadline for comments is 19 February.

8. Comments have been invited from the sector and we will pull together a detailed response, but based on our previous expressed views it is proposed that we should respond along the following lines:

- Generally speaking inspection should only be triggered as a matter of last resort where the situation is urgent; of high significance or where the locality is “in denial”;
- A red flag or other concern about performance should not be an automatic trigger for further inspection – alternative improvement activity may be more a more appropriate response;
- As a result the Inspectorates should engage with the locality before taking any decisions about any action they might take;
- Where it is considered that inspection is the most appropriate response then the inspectorates should work together to manage the burden of inspection activity in a local area through their “gate-keeping” functions;
- The exact scope and scale of inspection activity should depend on the individual circumstances;
- The purpose of triggered inspection should not be to confirm a previous judgement but rather to support improvement. In this context we do not agree that it would be appropriate to score the inspection outcomes.

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9. Members are invited to agree the headline comments above and to authorise the Lead members to approve the final response in the light of further feedback from the sector.

Sector support

10. The different approach to assessment embodied in CAA identifies a number of challenges for the sector, for example

- The focus on outcomes delivered through partnership reinforces the need for robust performance management arrangements across the LSP
- The intended reliance on local performance management data highlights the need for timely and good quality performance data at local level.

11. In order to help the sector respond to these and other challenges the IDeA continues to support a range of improvement activities. These include direct support through Locality Peer Challenges; targeted improvement activity and other national programmes such as Leadership, Equalities and Diversity and Economic Development and many others.

12. Currently the IDeA is refreshing its Performance Management [PM] 'offer' on its website using an Expert Advisory Panel drawn from the best performers in this field, as well as undertaking action learning with a number of authorities/partnerships. These groups are not only shaping the size and content of the toolkit but also contributing to a range of case studies. The Managing Local Performance Project is also using its Community of Practice [COP], and innovative social media not only to develop the thinking but also to enable active debate on PM issues that authorities and partners face day to day. Currently the COP is one of the most popular sites with 2759 users and on average 17,378 monthly page impressions.

13. The IDeA/LGA self evaluation toolkit developed in preparation for CAA has been well used by the sector. The first CAA watch survey showed that 66% of the respondents were intending to use it or had used it. In the second survey the sector was asked the same question and 43% said yes, of which 88% said they found it very useful.

14. And finally numerous conferences/workshops events on driving improvement have been held over the last 12 months and many supporting guides written. These include: CAA Scrutiny Guide, CAA guides for Members and Officers and more recently a CAA Communications guide.

15. Our future plans for supporting the sector are around Data Quality as well as involvement in the CLG Effective Partnership Data Management Project which is seeking to develop a PM system for an LSP/Area rather than a traditional single organisation PM system.

16. Further challenges for the sector may be identified in the joint Inspectorate evaluation of CAA to be published in February.

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Financial Implications

There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

Implications for Wales

There is a different approach to performance management in Wales.

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