

## Information about the Comprehensive Area Assessment from the Audit Commission Website:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/audit/caa/pages/whatiscaa.aspx>

(accessed 31st December 2009).

### What is CAA?

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

The first results of these assessments have now been published - in straightforward, jargon-free language - on a new Oneplace website (external link). They are also available in print and through other media. They make for an evolving picture of local life.

CAA is a story about people and places. For the first time, six individual inspectorates have provided a joint assessment of what it is like to live in each area of England and have assessed the prospects for sustainable improvement in the future.

Local public services will be held collectively to account for their impact on improving quality of life for residents. This means that CAA looks across councils, health bodies, police forces, fire and rescue services and others responsible for local public services, which are increasingly expected to work in partnership to tackle the challenges facing their communities.

CAA focuses on what is preventing improvement and identifies success and innovation that others can learn. In this way CAA is:

- 1) a catalyst for improved local services and better value for money
- 2) a source of independent information and assurance for citizens, service users and taxpayers
- 3) an independent evidence base for central government on progress against national priorities
- 4) a means of rationalising and coordinating inspection.

CAA looks most at what matters locally, reflecting the priorities of local communities, political leaders and service chiefs. It covers issues like reducing health inequalities, increasing affordable housing, reducing the fear of crime, improving education, attracting investment or reducing the area's carbon footprint. The issues assessed in each area reflect local priorities for improving quality of life and protecting the most vulnerable.

Other service or organisation specific assessments will continue. For example, health and police services will still be assessed by their respective inspectorates for those services that they are solely responsible for, but these will be delivered alongside CAA to avoid any duplication. Schools, colleges, social housing and residential care homes will also continue to be inspected to check they meet required standards.