

locality self evaluation

guidance for partnerships - January 2009

1. This guidance has been developed for partnerships to assist you in developing your own locality self evaluation. This will help you agree an assessment of your own performance and to identify where focused attention and improvement is needed to achieve local priorities. It is based on two phases of trialling and learning from the experience of fourteen local strategic partnerships, each of which undertook a locality self evaluation for their area. It has also been developed in consultation with the joint inspectorates.

Role of Locality Self Evaluation

2. Assessment of performance, within the context of CAA, moves away from the 'tick box' approach of assessing past performance to one that is based on a locality's own assessment of its performance, ambition and risks to delivery. The objective of locality self evaluation is to support the development of an informed view, adequately evidenced, of how an area is doing in its own terms and against its own ambitions and targets. It also allows you to reflect on how progress will be sustained in the future – balancing risks with available resources, and recognising the role of local political leadership and politically led dialogue with citizens and communities.
3. On this basis, the primary role of the locality self evaluation is to facilitate a shared assessment of the needs and issues in the area, progress against priorities and outstanding challenges still to be addressed. It allows your partnership to take stock and take action where necessary to ensure it is on course to achieving outcomes for local citizens.
4. It will also provide a framework for external challenge by inspectorates to assess the risks to delivery and arrive at an overall judgement on the area on the basis of a shared understanding of how and why priorities have been set. More detail on the joint inspectorate proposals regarding the role of self evaluation in the context of CAA is outlined below.
5. It is essential that your locality self evaluation process and finished document is sufficiently self

challenging and based on robust evidence and dialogue. This will ensure that it facilitates real improvement by your local partnership. Genuine openness and honesty between partners will be vital not only to agree on the real and outstanding issues within the area but also to work together towards addressing these issues. Also, within the context of CAA, the development of robust and challenging self evaluation for the area should enable the inspectorates' role to be more proportionate.

Role of Self Evaluation within Joint Inspectorate Proposals for CAA

6. Self evaluation will have a key role within the CAA framework. The joint inspectorates' proposal for consultation, issued in summer 2008, notes that:

"Councils and their partners, and their representative bodies, are developing approaches to self-evaluation. While we are not making it a requirement of CAA, we do expect that each area will wish to complete an annual self-evaluation and we will take full account of it and any service level self-evaluation. We do not intend to repeat the work carried out already by the council or its partners. We will expect that any self-evaluation is based on verifiable evidence. The more robust the self-evaluation the more reliance we will be able to place on it.

CAA will draw as far as possible on the information used by the council and its partners to manage performance and deliver improvements set out in the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategies. This approach will minimise the administrative burden imposed by CAA and will make optimum use of self-evaluation."

We fully expect that the final framework for CAA will confirm the inspectorates continued support for the approach to self evaluation set out in this guidance note.



Undertaking Self Evaluation and Using this Guidance Note

7. This guidance note sets out the key issues to be considered when undertaking your locality self evaluation. The process of self evaluation should aid learning and common understanding between partners – its effectiveness will depend on the extent to which there is openness, honesty and trust between partners.
8. The experience of the fourteen trials showed clearly that the outcome of undertaking self evaluation can be stronger partnership working and a shared commitment towards achieving improved working towards priority outcomes in the area. More information on the experience of the trials, the processes they followed and their 'top tips' is available on the IDeA website at www.IDeA.gov.uk/caa
9. The output of the process can be in the form of a document or work programme and the trials have demonstrated that it is most useful for this to be revisited at regular points, closely tied into the partnership's performance management procedures, to reassess progress and actions.
10. The self evaluation process should be commissioned and agreed by the local strategic partnership for the area (including by the Cabinet of the local authority). The output of the process will be an agreed document, setting out key issues and how these will be addressed in the future.
11. In addition to the Local Area Agreement (LAA), the self evaluation should draw on existing strategies. Key documents will be the Sustainable Community Strategy (or strategies), the Local Development Framework, Community Safety Partnership Plan and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and other key council and partner strategies.
12. It is recommended that a partnership carries out an annual self evaluation in line with the existing performance management cycle. However, after the first year it may only require updating in line with new evidence and priorities. Used in this way, the annual self evaluation can become an integral part of the LSP's own annual strategic and performance management cycle, allowing the partnership the opportunity to reflect and take stock before each partner's own planning cycle begins, informed by the partnership's commitments.
13. The self evaluation should identify areas of concern that may benefit from more detailed examination, for example through an in-depth scrutiny exercise, and inform future plans – ultimately leading to improved performance.
14. The guiding principle is to have a strong focus on the outcomes that the partnership is trying to

achieve. Crucially the process should be about reviewing whether the partnership is getting towards achieving these outcomes and assessing the difference that is being made or that needs to be made. It should also be about evaluating the impact of the partnership's recent efforts. Looking at what has worked and what hasn't worked along with assessing where there are gaps and risks or opportunities.

Self Evaluation in a Two Tier Area

15. In a two tier area, the process of self evaluation can be undertaken across the county region, including all districts in the area. It can also be undertaken for the locality of a district, albeit working across the tiers of local government. The process has been trialled in both instances for both county and district areas.
16. It is essential that all tiers are actively engaged in the development of the self evaluation for the area. The focus of the self evaluation document should be on the outcomes for the area and the contribution that each tier and partnership is able to make towards meeting the outcomes. It should also highlight where there is need for more collective work to ensure that current gaps or issues are being addressed and the plans for doing this.

Issues to be covered by Self Evaluation

17. Locality self evaluation should cover three main issues:
 - Understanding local needs and translation into local priorities
 - The delivery of improvements and outcomes in the area
 - Gap analysis and planning for the future
18. These headings can be cross referred to the questions covered within the area assessment within CAA, which looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people and the prospects for future improvements.
19. Using the self evaluation headings, listed above, will also enable your partnership to be collectively self aware of key issues and ensure that there are effective plans in place to address any concerns. This is vital for both facilitating improvement towards meeting local priorities and also to ensure inspection is proportionate, within the context of CAA.
20. Outlined below are the key elements that together can provide a jointly agreed narrative for your partnership.

A) Understanding local needs and translation into local priorities

The process of self evaluation should look at the partnership's understanding of local needs and aspirations and ensure that this knowledge has been used in the development of local priorities. It also needs to recognise the role played by the political leadership of the area in balancing aspirations, risks and available resources in developing local priorities. Outlined below are a series of prompts for the partnership to consider. The purpose of the prompts are to ensure that there are clear priorities based on understanding of need and that there is a shared commitment to the achievement of these priorities. The partnership can refer to documents already in place rather than duplicate what is already in existence.

Prompts to consider:

- What is the **vision** that the elected councilors have for their area, particularly the leadership of the council?
- What are the arrangements for **community engagement** to provide an accurate understanding of the diverse needs and interests of all sections of the community, including those at risk of disadvantage or social exclusion?
- How are **citizens**, from all parts of the community, encouraged and supported to feed in their views into priority-setting, decision making, service development and evaluation within and across the partnership organisations? Do they know what has changed as a result of their input? Were citizens involved in the setting of priorities for their area?
- Is the **local intelligence** robust enough to provide a solid base for future plans and accurately identify opportunities, risks and threats for the future well-being of the community? Is local intelligence shared amongst the partnership?
- Have **councillors** facilitated the dialogue and participation to ensure the views of local people are heard in the decision making process? How have they taken account of equality, community cohesion and sustainable development issues?
- What are the **local priorities** and are those outcomes reflected in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA targets? Taken together do they focus on what really matters for the local area taking into account any recent changes in circumstances?
- Has the partnership got a good knowledge of the **diversity** profile of their communities - including disabled people, minority ethnic groups, older and younger people, lesbian and gay people, and people of transgender, those who hold religious or other belief systems and other vulnerable groups? Is there evidence of equality gaps or unequal outcomes relating to any of these communities?

- What are the priorities for **tackling inequality and disadvantage** within the area?
- What are the priorities for improving the safeguarding of **vulnerable adults** and **children** in the area?

B) The Delivery of Improvements and Outcomes in the Area

The issues covered in this section focus on reviewing the extent to which the partnership is already delivering on its priorities and achieving outcomes in the area. Priorities should be those highlighted within key overarching strategies such as the Sustainable Community Strategy, LAA, Local Development Framework, Children and Young People's Plan and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and other thematic-specific shared strategies e.g. relating to crime and disorder, economic development, health inequality and older people. The partnership can refer to documents already in place rather than duplicate what is already in existence.

Prompts to consider:

- To what extent is the partnership successfully delivering against the priorities and achieving desired **outcomes** in the local area?
- Where is the partnership having greatest positive impact and where does it need to **focus effort** in the future? What is working well and what isn't?
- To what extent is life improving for **local citizens**, including improved community cohesion and empowerment?
- How is this being **measured** and is the performance data robust?
- Have **engagement activities** resulted in the needs of citizens being known more fully and acted on?
- To what extent is the partnership driving **economic prosperity** and making the area more **sustainable**?
- How effectively is the partnership tackling **inequality and disadvantage** in the area?
- How effectively is the partnership working together to safeguard **vulnerable children** and **adults** in the area?
- Are the vision and priorities for the area translated into **operational plans** across the partnership?
- Is there a robust performance management framework which enables the partnership to **monitor progress** in the delivery of the priorities for the local area?
- Is **information** on performance in delivering the priorities for the local area easily accessible by citizens?

C) Gap analysis and planning for the future

The key purpose of the self evaluation is to evaluate where there are gaps in performance that need to be addressed or where more focused attention is needed to ensure that the partnership will deliver its outcomes. It will also highlight where action plans are in place to address these issues. The gap analysis and planning for the future is vital in driving self improvement and to improve partnership working. It is essential in ensuring self awareness and the partnerships ability to really deliver on improvements.

Prompts to consider:

- In working towards achieving local priorities, where are there **gaps** that require more focused attention e.g. where progress is at a slower pace or where needs are changing, or new issues emerging? If so, what are the areas?
- How **robust** are **plans** in place to improve the situation? To what extent is progress being delivered and how well are they being implemented?
- What has been the **impact** of our recent efforts? What has worked? What has not worked?
- Where are the **risks** and **opportunities** that the partnership can address to improve its overall impact?
- What will the partnership do to address the issues it has highlighted? **Who will do what by when?**
- Are the **governance arrangements** fit for the purpose of achieving the outcomes in the area?
- What are the future partnership resourcing issues? How will the partnership ensure it is delivering **value for money** and improving **efficiency** through partnership working?
- Are partners able to hold each other to account? Can differences and difficulties be overcome? Do local public service providers and other partners support the council's **scrutiny** function e.g. provide evidence, and respond to the findings?
- What action has been taken previously to address **underperformance** in key priorities? Were these successful? What was the learning and based on this, what more needs to be done?
- Are local people kept **well informed** of key issues regarding their area, with communication being coordinated between partners?
- How will the partnership effectively manage the **reputation** of the area and of the partner organisations?

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