



**in Yorkshire and the Humber**

**Discussions and dialogue about  
the  
Duty to Involve  
and the  
CAA process**

**Suggestions, Proposals  
Questions and Action Points  
arising from workshop held  
14<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

## The assessment process

### Summary of common themes

#### What we would like the Audit Commission to ensure / do:

- Actual site visits 'drilling down' in order to seek different perspectives
- Outcomes and actual impact – interested in what didn't work as well as success
- Involve people as assessors.

#### Questions to be asked:

- How do partners join-up (including their resources) to enable involvement?
- Question about poor performance / where its failed and what steps need to be taken / and who should be involved in improvement.
- Are the engagement techniques being used fit for purpose?

#### Genuine depth and breadth of involvement will be seen through:

- Identifying instances of successful and unsuccessful engagement – then talk to representatives of all the people involved
- Obtaining a truly representative view from geographic and interest groups (ALL)
- Reviewing complaints and local controversial issues – how authorities respond to people wanting to influence (i.e. wish for engagement initiated by people)
- Working with representative partnership group who provide menu of examples and opportunities to assess
- Talking to real people
- Meeting, listening and observing in a number of settings – borough wide, neighbourhood and communities of interest
- Inspecting evidence of strategy, plans and impact at a number of levels and including people's experience
- Visiting a range of geographical areas at a neighbourhood level – not to be steered by the local authority – linking in with main VCS organisations in that area and also drill down to communities in that area
- Identifying how activity at a local level then links through the 'layers' – could be panels
- Ensuring that
  - Engagement
  - Decision making processes
  - Consultationare all fair, open and transparent – across all agencies and services
- Focusing on outcomes/ impact, not just process good practice

- Providing feedback to participants on outcome of process and outcome of subsequent activity/ service

**Suggested questions to be covered in the assessment process (and examples of evidence)**

- How well do you understand the make up of communities in your area?
- How are representatives valued and listened to? Meet reps and have decision making trails/audits
- Evidence that there is a whole system approach – community engagement strategy; resources
- Working both sides of the equation: What is in place to support organisational change and development? Support to officers on community engagement? Evidence from participants of impact of learning and development; tracking impact
- How are communities involved in decision making?
- Are the consultations & engagement techniques fit for purpose, place and person?
- Do local people understand the priorities of the LAA and how can they influence it?
- Provide evidence of informing, involving, sustaining engagement
- How will you ensure equitable treatment of rural communities?
- How will people and communities be involved and receive feedback?
- Will you ensure that all 198 NI are monitored?
- How is community engagement/involvement resourced and supported?
- What resources have been allocated across the partnership to ensure engagement?
- What is the experience of communities in accessing resources and opportunities?
- How do you evaluate it? What hasn't worked, sharing learning of good practice
- What impact has resulted from your approach to community engagement and empowerment?
- What is your evidence base for this, and indicators?
- How are you engaging the third sector in your improvement agenda?
- How will they encourage the lead authority for the CAA to work with partners (including third sector) to develop best practice in involvement and engagement?
- What are implications for poor performance against Duty to Involve for all statutory partners?
- Will they involve stakeholders (organisations and individuals) in the CAA process?
- Demonstrate how partners work together toward a joined up approach to engaging communities
- When a strategic approach to joined up working has failed or encountered problems, what steps have been taken to address this?
- What steps do you have in place to ensure involvement of the community as a whole? (young people, older people, disabled, BME etc)

- Use of resources – how are services being delivered? – what is effective?  
Role of third sector?
- What is 'best value' for money in terms of community engagement?

### **Is CAA going in the right direction?**

CAA concept of 'area' assessment is a good one e.g. outcomes/impact focus and like the fact that the Audit Commission team will have a continuing relationship with LAA areas but there are some concerns:

- Capturing success of the Duty to Involve won't be captured by CAA
- Use the mechanisms that already exist e.g. CENs
- Role of third sector as defined by CLG – reaching marginalised groups – where is this in CAA?
- Need to review support for partners, so that can take part in informed debate (behaviours/ relationships)
- If LSP doesn't work well, then assessment will be flawed

### **How can we help?**

- Case study approach where known difficulties
- CENs etc could take CAA process out to communities for a broader discussion and feedback
- Pool of people in the region who could work with the Audit Commission

### **Partners need to consider:**

- Role of elected members in representing views?

## **Additional workshop participant thoughts and comments on the Duty to Involve and the CAA**

### **Questions the CAA might ask:**

- In the first year the CAA should ask what the authorities plan for the implementation of the duty to involve is and measure its acceptability by the criteria below
- Cash value of resources allocated to third sector bodies to support involvement of community and community groups in deprived areas where the need to support involvement is greatest and overcome social exclusion. This would demonstrate the reality of any stated commitment.  
Example: A crude measure could be developed on the basis that in Sheffield 27 out of 47 Community Forums operate in deprived areas. If Sheffield's population of 640,720 is divided by the number of forums overall that gives an average of 13632 people to the Community Forum area. To operate effectively a Community Forum needs a staff of 1 FTE development worker and 0.5 FTE administrator plus premises of some kind costing overall around £40k P/A, so the cost of running a community forum costs about £2.93 per person in its area per year. To run the 27 forums operating in deprived areas then would cost the best value authorities in Sheffield £1080,000 per year costing £1.68 per head of population overall. So if the best value authorities were spending less than £1.68 on supporting the third sector to deliver involvement/engagement or more than that on doing so themselves and failing they would fail on this measure
- An understanding of the make up of the community and how this was made use of.
- How are representatives valued and listened to? Meet reps and have decision making trails/audits
- Evidence that there is a whole system approach – community engagement strategy; resources
- Working both sides of the equation: What is in place to support organisational change and development? Support to officers on community engagement. Evidence from participants of impact of learning and development; tracking impact
- How do the authorities know the community organisations they commission to deliver involvement/engagement? This would be evidenced by something like Active Partners Benchmarking
- The amount of resources committed to train staff from the authorities and the third sector to co-operate and deliver practical involvement
- How well do the Best Value Authorities understand the communities in their area?

This would be evidenced by comparison of the authorities' view of the situation with that of Community organisations

- How highly are the representatives valued? Evidenced by interviews with the reps and comparison of actual practice with the local equivalent of the Sheffield First Protocol
- What was the consideration process carried out, in relation to aspects of involvement selected by auditors? Authorities to justify why they had chosen to involve or not to the extent they had

### **Things the CAA must do:**

- The assessment visits must be organised by a group of the best value authorities from the LSP together with the third sector in negotiation with the auditors
- Weight overall scoring so that involvement has to be successful to achieve a 'satisfactory' rating.
- Work directly with groups on the ground, without 'minders' from the best value authorities on the ground

### **General Points and further questions to the Audit Commission**

The consultation paper on the CAA indicates in section 91 that there will be 'Reduced Levels of Self Assessment'. However in the presentation there was a great deal of reference to it

A question we should have asked relates to section 38 of the consultation paper, where it says:

'The inspectorates' area risk assessment is likely to address the following key questions:

- How well does the partnership understand and assess the needs of its communities now and in the future?
- Does it use this understanding to inform its local priorities?
- Does the partnership organise itself and ensure it has the capacity to deliver these priorities?
- Has it secure and effective arrangements to identify and manage the risks to achieving successful outcomes?
- Are improved outcomes likely to be achieved?'

*If the phrase 'Risk Assessment' is to be dropped, are these still to be the key questions and will they be pursuing the principles of the Duty to Involve under the first and second?*

Having thought about it some more, given the description of DCLG definition of success in delivering the Duty to Involve:

'engagement should be embedded as standard practice throughout authorities, central to service delivery, policy and decision making.' and it goes on to insist that authorities gather the necessary data to demonstrate that not only do they engage with and involve communities and third sector organisations but that this informs and influences their understanding of communities needs and they way in which they communicate with the community and that this is demonstrated and supported by communities feeling that 'the authority provides relevant and accessible engagement opportunities and will know how to get involved, either directly or though their elected representative. Local people will recognise that the authority's policies reflect this involvement and services are tailored to local needs, even though difficult choices in service provision need to be made'.

*How are CLG expecting to enforce the Duty if not through the CAA?*

**Action points from the workshop:**

- COGS will circulate the details of the Audit Commission leads for each part of the region.
- We should all take responsibility for taking these discussions further e.g. at our LSPs, in the regional LAA network events
- Terry and Jeanette will take the idea of community involvement and potential for community assessors in the CAA assessment process back to their core team – potential to trial this idea in the Y&H region
- Hold a second meeting with the Audit Commission later in the year to follow up on progress and to monitor whether we have informed the process at all
- Terry to send through contact details for the four regional team leaders, COGS to circulate
- Invite the 4 team leaders to any follow up meeting and build relationships
- Keep the language simple
- Keep a track of VCS representation on LSPs in the region
- Keep a watching brief over the Duty to Involve and support for third sector e.g. the community anchors development and relationship with community engagement
- NEPYH / COGS to prepare a briefing/ fact sheet CAA and Duty to Involve in easy jargon free language.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Follow up to the workshop discussions:**

#### **1. Contact details of Audit Commission staff dealing with CAAs in the 4 sub-regions**

North Yorkshire	Mike Newbury
Humberside	Joanne McDonough
South Yorkshire	John Casey
West Yorkshire	Stephen Gregg

They can all be contacted via **0113 251 7130**

#### **2. Comment from a partner in response to workshop discussions:**

‘It does intrigue me as the why Duty to Involve and the whole debate about empowerment and engagement is not equally aimed at, or identified, to equally apply at regional (future Single Integrated Regional Strategy), sub-regional and city-regional (MAA) levels and structures where extremely important policy, strategy and investment decisions for localities will continue to be taken e.g. housing and transport. Is this just all too difficult for the Group and or Audit Commission or deemed to be beyond the remit or just a normal part of un-joined up Government? Maybe citizens are not expected to be able to operate at the higher strategic levels of complexity?’