

# LGIU Local Government Information Unit

Independent Intelligent Information

## National Indicators for Local Authorities and Partnerships: CLG Consultation on draft paper (LGIUandSTEER)

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Author: Janet Sillett

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### Overview

This briefing gives the background to the CLG consultation document, *National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions*, that was published on 8 November 2007, and highlights what is the key focus of the consultation. The consultation period ends on 21 December 2007.

The document provides authorities with the detailed definitions for the 198 headline indicators that were published alongside the comprehensive spending review. The consultation is on the methodology - the data sources to be used, the frequency of reporting and the level (such as district or county) at which the reporting will occur.

It is important that specialist performance officers take the time to examine the indicators and respond to the consultation, so that the final version of the national indicator set is realistic and user friendly.

This briefing concludes by urging authorities to consult partners over shared indicators and particularly when responding to the separate consultations on the indicators for the fire and rescue service and the assessment for policing and community safety (APACS).

We will be publishing a further briefing shortly with an analysis of the indicators themselves, concentrating particularly on new indicators, and what they could mean for local authorities.

### Briefing in full

#### Background

The new performance framework was outlined in the local government white paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*. In October 2007, the government published a new single set of 198 national indicators (NIs) for English local authorities and local authority partnerships as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The NIs flow from the priorities identified in Public Service Agreements and Departmental Strategic Objectives, also announced in the CSR.

The NIs replace all previous central government sets for local government, including best value performance indicators and the performance assessment framework for social care. Services and activities undertaken by local government, alone or in partnership, which are

not directly reflected in the national indicator set but which are important to local areas will be performance managed locally – with local authorities and their partners setting priorities, determining performance indicators and monitoring and reviewing performance and being accountable for all delivery to their citizens. The government claims that the national indicator set provides clarity about the balance between national and local priorities.

Although all areas will have to report on all of the indicators, the primary focus for performance management will be on those indicators against which targets are agreed in the local area agreement (LAA), plus the statutory targets for educational attainment and early years.

Performance against each of the 198 indicators will be published annually by the Audit Commission, as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, for every LAA area, allowing the public to compare the services they receive.

A new 'Place Survey' will be used to collect 20 of the citizen perspective indicators included in the National Indicator Set. This will replace the Best Value User Satisfaction surveys. It is anticipated that the first Place Survey will be undertaken in Autumn 2008. A separate consultation document will be published in late November on the methodology, including suggested questions, for the new survey. The Place Survey will also be subject to piloting early in the New Year.

### **Assessments of Police and Community Safety (APACS) and fire and rescue service indicators**

The national indicator set covers both services delivered alone and in partnership and encourages local authorities and their partners to work together to deliver improved outcomes. The indicators that measure outcomes which require joint-working by different local partners appear in the performance frameworks for each of those partners, such as the national indicators for community safety which are also used in the Assessments of Policing and Community Safety

The Home Office's technical consultation on the APACS will be published shortly and run for a period of six weeks. The detailed definitions will be available in the APACS consultation on the Home Office website.

Communities and Local Government will be consulting on a revised version of the National Framework (NF) for the Fire and Rescue Service in November. The next version of the NF will have a three year lifespan from 2008.

### **The national indicators and Local Area Agreements (LAAs)**

Local Strategic Partnerships at the single tier or county council level will agree with the government up to 35 designated targets for their area as part of their Local Area Agreement, reflecting local priorities for improvement against the national indicator set. There will also be statutory targets set against educational attainment and early years national indicators. The Development of New LAA Framework Operational Guidance 2007 will be published shortly.

Ninety five of the national indicators are existing measures, and, therefore, have established baselines to inform negotiation of LAA targets. Thirty nine are new indicators whose definitions use existing data sources, which can be used to establish baselines. However, 64 of the national indicators are completely new measures, for which there will be no baselines available to

inform the negotiation of LAA targets to be signed off by June 2008. The paper sets out which indicators are new, and which are existing, including where new indicators draw on existing data.

CLG will shortly be publishing operational guidance for negotiating new LAAs that will explain how to use the indicator set to baseline performance and translate priorities into targets.

### **Level of reporting**

The paper sets out the spatial level (eg county, district, super output area or at sub-regional), which performance against the national indicators will be reported to the government. For districts, for example, this will mean that if an indicator is defined for reporting at the district level and there are six districts in a county, there will be six figures reported for that national indicator. The performance of district councils will only be reported for those 64 indicators which are defined at the district spatial level.

The spatial level for collecting and reporting national indicators is intended to set the lowest spatial level at which national reporting – and therefore national performance management - will be required. Respondees to the consultation are asked to highlight any indicators that they consider are not defined at the right spatial level.

### **The consultation**

The consultation document, *National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions*, published on 8 November 2007, gives the detailed definitions for the 198 headline indicators and is consulting on them. These will then be included in the final handbook of definitions to be published in February 2008 for implementation from 1 April 2008. It is also seeking views on a limited number of more general issues related to the indicator set.

The introduction to the paper stresses that the government is not seeking views on whether individual indicators should be included in the new single set of national indicators, nor on the substance or the balance of outcomes represented by the indicators. This is because the indicators represent government decisions on national priorities to be delivered by local government, which were taken at the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007, and are therefore not subject to further consultation.

### **Responding to the consultation**

**The consultation period ends on 21 December 2007.**

emailed to [niconsultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:niconsultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

The government welcomes responses on the technical descriptions of the national indicators and the method of measuring and reporting on the indicators. In particular, they want feedback on:

- the clarity of each technical definition
- whether the technical definitions as drafted will lead to any unintended consequences
- whether there any definitions that will not work in practice
- whether the right spatial level of reporting has been defined for each indicator
- which indicators would be suitable for disaggregation
- any other comments on the templates, including suggestions for improvement.

## Comment

It is important that officers responsible for performance management respond in some detail to this survey, so that the final product is as user friendly as possible. Although the indicators have been considerably reduced in number, councils will be concerned to examine what data is requested, when, and at what level for different measures.

There is clearly going to be additional work involved in the transition period, but councils will want to use the time running up to the new framework to consider issues such as identifying with partners which indicators are most relevant to local priorities and how they could be used to establish LAA targets.

It is particularly important that councils consult their partners when they are responding to this consultation and the separate APACS and fire and rescue service consultations. The different authorities should be in agreement if their responses are to have the greatest impact.

## Additional Information

**LGIU and CSN Seminars that may be of interest:**

[Annual Children's Services Conference](#) 28/11/2007

[Comprehensive Spending Review: the unofficial view](#) 27/11/2007

[Reducing Waste, Reducing Resistance](#) 29/11/2007

[The Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration](#) 30/11/2007

## Covers

## Question

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## Related links

- [Consultation document](#)
- [National Indicator Set](#)

## Related briefings

- [The Transition from CPA to CAA - first consultation April 2007](#) 

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