

## NLCAS - Local area agreements and leaving care services Policy briefing, January 2008

### Background

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are currently voluntary, three-year agreements between central government and local authorities and their partners, which deliver national outcomes in a way that reflects local priorities.

LAAs are currently organised around four separately funded and negotiated blocks:

- Children and young people
- Safer and stronger communities
- Healthier communities and older people
- Economic development and enterprise

But, from April 2008, **LAAs will be changing.**

LAAs will become statutory from 2008-09 onwards. They will be at the centre of a new performance framework for local government, becoming the key delivery contract between central government, local authorities, and their partners.

The new LAAs are negotiated under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

They are different in a number of ways from the first phase of LAAs.

Here's a summary of the main differences:

	<b>Old</b>	<b>New</b>
	<b>LAAs 2005-2008</b>	<b>LAAs from spring 2008</b>
<b>Legal status</b>	No legal requirement to negotiate an LAA	Statutory: all (upper-tier) councils must prepare an LAA with partners
<b>Two-tier arrangements</b>	County council negotiated and led LAA	County council the 'responsible authority' to lead partnership, district councils are important partners
<b>Timescale</b>	Three-year agreement: Commenced in three groups, 2005-6, 2006-7, 2007-08	Three-year agreement: all councils/areas on same timetable: 2008-11
<b>Scope</b>	Three, later four blocks: safer and stronger communities; children and young people;	No requirement for blocks: local flexibility based on sustainable

	healthier communities and older people; economic development and enterprise	community strategy and other local priorities.
<b>Local and national targets</b>	Some mandatory targets, choice of others	National Indicator set including 16 education and early years statutory targets, up to 35 other targets to be negotiated according to needs of area. Named partners should also negotiate and support local targets
<b>Finance</b>	Previously ring-fenced funds merged into funding tied to blocks; later into LAA grant; also pump-priming grant	No specific LAA grant; all partners should gear mainstream funding towards LAA objectives.
<b>Reward funding</b>	Financial reward tied to achievements on specific agreed 'stretch' targets	Formula to pay reward funding according to performance across the range of targets
<b>Partnership arrangements</b>	Voluntary co-operation in a LSP, some statutory requirements on specific services to engage with thematic partnerships	Statutory 'duty to co-operate' on named agencies to negotiate LAA, sign up to specific local and national targets, implement, and respond to council scrutiny
<b>Performance management</b>	Local performance management, reported to government office (GO)	Local performance management, new council scrutiny powers, external assessment by CAA (Comprehensive area assessment)

NB: table taken from:

[http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/cllr\\_guide\\_toLAAs.pdf](http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/cllr_guide_toLAAs.pdf)

### **Guidance on negotiation of LAA has been issued in 2 parts:**

Negotiating new local area agreements (published Sept 2007)

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/negotiatingnewlaas](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/negotiatingnewlaas)

Development of new LAA framework operation guidance 2007 (Published Nov 2007)

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/laaoperationalguidance](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/laaoperationalguidance)

### **Funding**

In the past LAAs have been divided into 4 thematic 'blocks' to which funding streams were tied. However, in the new LAAs funding will no longer be restricted within the themes.

Local Area Agreements give local authorities the flexibility to direct funding to meet their priorities.

The Local Government White Paper set out a new approach to allocating funding.

First, through **non-ringfenced general grant** (providing funding for core services, the main item is formula grant – distributed amongst all authorities according to relative need).

Second, through **non-ringfenced area based grant** (this is allocated according to specific policy criteria rather than general formulae).

Third, through ringfenced or non-ringfenced **specific grants**.

Local authorities are free to use the totality of their non-ringfenced funding as they see fit to support the delivery of local, regional and national priorities in their areas, including the achievement of LAA targets.

### **Indicators and targets**

Local strategic partnerships at the single tier or county council level will agree with Central government up to 35 targets for their area as part of their local area agreement. The 35 targets will be about improvement and stretching local performance

In addition, statutory targets (16) will be set on educational attainment and early years.

Local partners can also agree any additional local targets that they wish but will not have to report on these and they will not be performance managed on these by central government.

A full list of possible performance indicators was published in October 2007 as part of the Comprehensive Spending review (as promised the Government reduced the number of indicators from 1200 to the new set of 198) published in *The new performance framework for local authorities and local authority partnerships: single set of national indicators*.

The 198 indicators underpin the new performance framework (95 of the national indicators are existing measures; 39 are new indicators which use existing data sources and 64 are completely new measures).

A consultation on the detailed definition of the 198 national indicators recently ended (21 December 2007).

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/indicatorsdefinitions](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/indicatorsdefinitions)

NB: NLCAS/WMTD submitted a response to this consultation

The new indicator set will be in place from April 2008.

After this time, a local authority will have to monitor and report on all 198 indicators locally. But for the LAA each area will negotiate with the GO up to 35 targets from the 198.

## **Managing performance**

Assessment of performance against these priorities will be carried out by the local public services inspectorates working together. The Audit Commission and 6 other inspectorates are jointly developing the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) – this will be introduced from April 2009 and replaces the current comprehensive performance assessment.

The inspectorates have recently published their first consultation on the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (deadline Friday 15 February 2008): [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp)

## **Leaving care indicators**

We are aware that there are 2 national indicators which specifically relate to care leavers (NI 147 & NI148).

### **NI 147 Care leavers in suitable accommodation**

The indicator measures accommodation outcomes for young adults formerly in care – a key group at risk of social exclusion. The indicator is intended to increase the proportion of former care leavers who are in suitable accommodation. This will help minimise the risk of care leavers being in unsuitable housing or becoming homeless.

### **NI 148 Care leavers in employment, education or training**

The indicator measures levels of participation in employment, education or training (EET) for young adults formerly in care – a key group at risk of social exclusion. The indicator is part of the Social Exclusion PSA and is intended to drive improvements in long-term outcomes for care leavers, by ensuring they receive the support they need to access employment, education or training.

See below for more detailed information on these indicators:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/543055>

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## **Getting involved**

In many areas setting priorities for LAAs will already be well underway. So now is the time to get engaged (if you are not already) with what your LSP is discussing and making sure the profile of care leavers is raised and reflected in the LAA.

Even if it is not possible to get the most relevant indicators included it would still be worth arguing the case that improving outcomes for care leavers will improve other targets.

Homeless link have put together some tips for influencing LAAs (adapted for leaving care):

- Find out who the chair and lead officer for the Local Strategic Partnership are and contact them directly urging them to include the needs of care leavers within the 35 targets.
- When in contact with these individuals find out when the next LSP meetings are and which is the sub-group responsible for care leavers and see if you can attend or make contact with the people on this group.
- Contact the Director in the local authority with responsibility for care leavers to lobby on behalf of this client group.
- Work closely with your second tier third sector agency e.g. CSV to make sure that they raise the needs of socially excluded individuals.
- Make contact with friendly local councillors to raise awareness about the needs of your client groups to ensure that they scrutinize LAAs appropriately.
- Work with other agencies representing clients who cross over with care leavers e.g. local criminal justice partnerships.
- Ensure that you can evidence the value of the work that you do and demonstrate the support needs of the clients - ensure your monitoring forms are properly and fully completed.
- Work to influence Government Offices to raise their awareness around leaving care and the needs of vulnerable groups.

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/briefings/LAAs251007>

### **Timetable 2008**

January – agree up to 35 priority issues with GO

March – agree children’s services statutory targets by end of March

February – May – negotiations with GO on up to 35 targets

June – recommended targets sent to ministers for sign off

### **Useful websites:**

[www.idea.gov.uk/laa](http://www.idea.gov.uk/laa)

### **Finally**

Please get in touch with NLCAS to share your experience of the LAA process in relation to care leavers.

Contact [Claire.Baker@raineronline.org](mailto:Claire.Baker@raineronline.org)