

Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee

19th January 2010

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT (CAA) REPORTS AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE (APRIL - SEPTEMBER)

Report of the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Executive Director City Services, and Executive Director Health, Housing and Adults Services

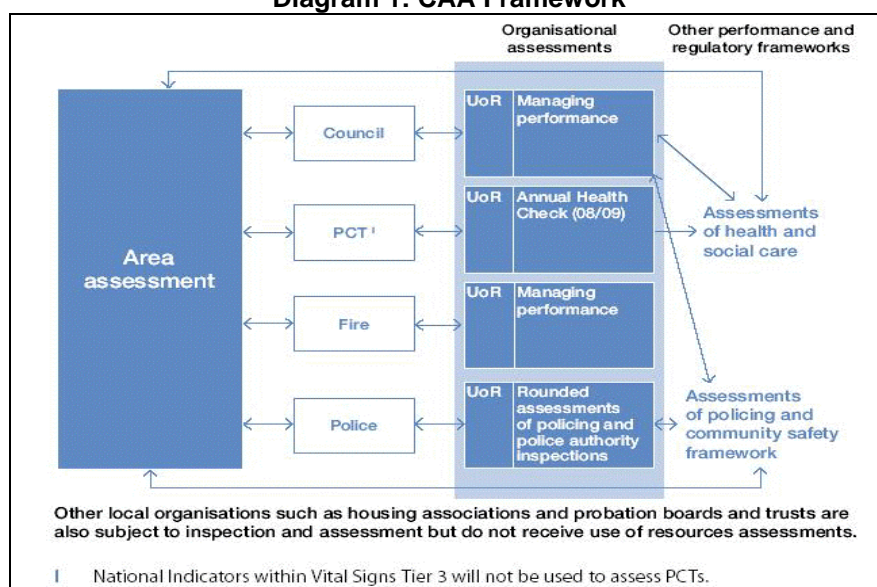
1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with the findings from the inaugural Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and a performance update which includes those areas identified by the Audit Commission (AC) as being the focus of improvement during 2010.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 CAA was introduced in April 2009 to provide an independent assessment of how local public services are working in partnership to deliver outcomes for an area. The first results were reported on the new Oneplace website (www.oneplace.direct.gov.uk) on 9 December 2009.
- 2.2 CAA comprises two main elements namely, an area assessment and an organisational assessment for each of the four main public sector organisations (i.e. council, fire, health and police). This is demonstrated in the diagram below.

Diagram 1: CAA Framework



- 3.3 Members will recall that a new national performance framework was implemented during 2008/2009. This includes 198 new National Indicators which replaces previous national performance frameworks. As part of this

new framework 49 national indicators have been identified as key priorities to be included in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Performance against the priorities identified in the LAA and associated improvement targets have been reported to Scrutiny committee throughout 2009 and are a key consideration in CAA in terms of the extent to which the partnership is improving outcomes for local people.

3.0 AREA ASSESSMENT

3.1 Process and methodology

3.1.1 The area assessment focuses on the prospects for better outcomes on local priorities and is an annual assessment of the work of the public services in the city by a range of inspectorates. It answers three key questions:

- How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
- How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
- What are the prospects for improvement?

3.1.2 Between April and September 2009 the CAA Lead (CAAL) assessed the work of the Sunderland Partnership (SP) as part of the inaugural CAA Area Assessment. This was achieved through a series of workshops, interviews and briefing notes and a review of evidence (e.g. key documents, performance indicators, consultation results, etc.). This was an iterative process and the CAAL shared the findings at regular intervals throughout.

3.2 Findings – good practice and areas for improvement

3.2.1 The area assessment is not scored and does not carry a star rating. It is a narrative report providing an overview of progress against key priorities for the area, overall successes and challenges.

3.2.2 Area assessments may award green or red flags. Red flags highlight those areas where there are significant concerns by the inspectorates about outcomes or future prospects, and where more or different actions are required. Green flags highlight exceptional performance or outstanding improvement in outcomes through an innovative approach, from which others nationally can learn. No red or green flags have been identified for Sunderland.

3.2.3 The fact that Sunderland has no red flags demonstrates that the inspectorates have no significant concerns and that the Council and its partners are clear about what needs to be done and has plans in place to secure the necessary impact on outcomes.

3.2.4 Although Sunderland was not awarded any green flags the report recognises the positive impact the SP is making on quality of life. For example:

- There is a good record of attracting new businesses and investment to the city and this is likely to continue helped by an Economic Masterplan.

- The Sunderland Learning Partnership is helping to improve skills in the city and clear plans are in place for it to continue to deliver improved outcomes.
- There is a good understanding of the health, social care and wellbeing needs of the population.
- Easier access to treatment is reducing some health inequalities and this is likely to continue.
- Access to primary health care at a local level is easier and care services for adults are good.
- Overall crime is lower in Sunderland than similar areas in England and Wales and continues to fall and fear of crime is reducing.
- There are positive outcomes from a range of targeted work including drug treatment programmes, a safer homes programme improving quality of life, youth engagement projects and parenting initiatives.
- Sunderland's local environment is currently ranked joint third best of the UK's 20 largest cities. Social housing and transport are good.

3.2.5 The report highlighted a small number of areas for improvement, which are already priorities for the city, namely:

- To reduce the number of young people in Sunderland that are not in employment, education or training (i.e. NEETs) from the current levels of one in young eight young people.
- To meet some key targets around health inequalities, which are not being met, such as reducing death rates for men to nearer the national average; reducing the teenage pregnancy rate; and smoking rates, particularly smoking during pregnancy.
- To continue to address child poverty, which is reducing faster than in other areas but remains high.
- To address the issue of affordable housing in Sunderland, through the implementation of developed plans.
- To ensure that City Region actions deliver improved actions in relation to transport and skills.
- To ensure the Alcohol Strategy delivers the planned outcomes, particularly in relation to alcohol related hospital admissions.

3.2.6 Good practice in relation to the services within the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny committee's remit and the council and Sunderland Partnership's own analysis of where we are at in relation to these improvement areas is contained in section 4 and 5. **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the position for relevant national indicators and also any local performance indicators that have been retained to supplement areas in the performance framework that are not well covered by the new national indicator set.

3.3 Improvement planning approach

3.3.1 The Sunderland Partnership's Delivery and Improvement Board considered the draft area assessment report, and in particular those areas identified as being in need of improvement at its meeting on 11 November, as part of a

wider discussion on improvement priorities for the next year. Delivery Plans are currently being refreshed to ensure that the work programme is targeting the right issues, and outcomes can be demonstrated, minimising the risk of areas for improvement becoming red flags in 2010. These Delivery Plans will be presented to Scrutiny committees in February 2010

3.4 2010 approach

3.4.1 The CAA Lead has now shared his planned approach to undertaking the evidence gathering for area assessment in 2010, which will differ significantly to the approach undertaken in 2009. There has been an acknowledgement within the inspectorates that the level of resources allocated to the assessment is not sustainable and so a more proportionate approach is now planned.

3.4.2 In Sunderland (and the rest of Tyne and Wear) the CAA Lead plans to adopt an approach with two complementary elements, namely:

- A Risk Assessment Matrix
- A small number of themed probes across Tyne and Wear (the exact nature and subject of the probes have yet to be agreed).

3.4.3 The Risk Assessment Matrix will be the primary tool against which the Sunderland Partnership will be assessed and is designed to provide greater clarity and certainty around the final outcome of the area assessment (for example the number of green and red flags that will be awarded in the final report).

3.4.4 The Matrix will incorporate those issues that were identified in the first year of the CAA area assessment as having the most potential to become red flags and green flags, as well as any themes that weren't considered in the first year of CAA that the CAA Lead wishes to explore in 2010 (e.g. mental health).

3.4.5 Once the Risk Assessment Matrix has been agreed, the CAA Lead will use it to monitor progress against the agreed performance trajectory (up until the end of September 2010) for each issue to arrive at his final area assessment judgement for 2010. Progress will be monitored through the Council and the Sunderland Partnership's performance management and reporting arrangements.

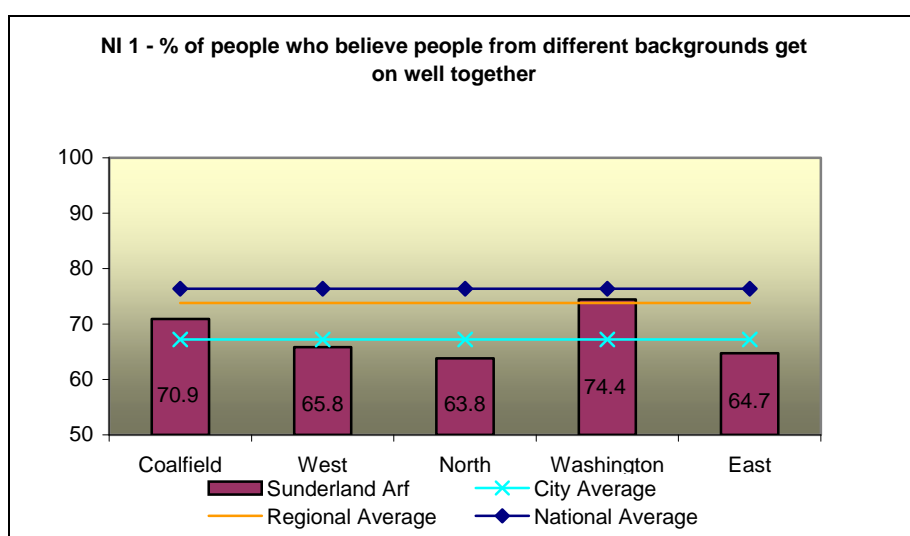
4.0 Audit Commission Findings

4.1 In relation to Sustainable Communities the CAA report recognises the following areas of positive performance

4.2 Social housing within the City is in a good condition. 99.4% of properties owned by registered social landlords (RSL) in the area meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, and the Council is working with its RSL partners to address the issues in the remaining non-compliant properties. Tenants and their families live in dwellings that are of a good standard with

consequent benefits to their health and well being. Availability of affordable housing is a significant issue for Sunderland. During 2008/09, 230 affordable new homes have been provided. The 299 additional homes built during 2008/09 is an improvement on the previous year's figure of 186 additional homes. The Council and partners have begun to address these problems, and plans have been developed for identified areas for development. This includes supporting Gentoo to provide a range of housing over the next 18 months through £40 million funding from the Government's 'Kickstart' scheme.

- 4.3 The 2008 Place Survey identified a lack of cohesion across different communities. Above average 64.6 per cent of people feel that they belong to their neighbourhood. But 67.2 per cent of people - which is below average - agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on. For further information the graph below demonstrates the percentage of residents in different area regeneration frameworks that perceive people from different backgrounds get on well together. More residents in Washington Arf (74.4%) and Coalfield Arf (70.9%) agree than the city average. Less residents in the north of the city (63.8%) agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on than in other areas.



A well above average (39 per cent) number of people think there is a problem with people not treating each other with respect. A successful pilot project in Hendon which reduced racial tensions and improved community cohesion is being rolled out across the city. There is more contact with young people and increased local area working helping to identify local issues and bring local communities together. There is however limited work in schools relating to community cohesion, though all schools in Sunderland provide a good range of out of school activities for children, young people and families.

- 4.4 There is good work in Sunderland to reduce partners' impact on the environment. There are positive comparisons with other areas regarding the consumption of natural resources. Sunderland has the 8th lowest per capita

consumption of natural resources of all UK cities. Sunderland Council is recognised by the Carbon Trust as a national leader in managing carbon emissions. This coupled with work on climate change, recently won a national Sustainable Communities Award 2009 for 'Tackling Climate Change'.

5.0 Areas for Improvement

In relation to Sustainable Communities the following issues have been identified in the first year of the CAA area assessment as having the most potential to become red flags

5.1 NI 154 Net additional homes provided

5.1.1 The number of net additional homes provided is as follows:

Ref	Description	2007/08 Outturn	2008/09 Outturn	Latest Update	Trend	Target 2009/10	On Target
NI 154	Net additional homes provided	186	299	185	▲	90	✓

5.1.2 The LAA target has been met and performance has exceeded the 2009/10 target at the six month stage of the year.

5.2 NI 155 Affordable homes

5.2.1 The number of affordable homes built in the city is as follows:

- 2004/05 120
- 2005/06 90
- 2006/07 210
- 2007/08 70
- 2008/09 230

5.2.2 In relation to 2007/08 benchmarks the:

- Average is 110 homes built
- Highest 25% performing partnerships = 222 homes built
- Lowest 25% performing partnerships = 50 homes built

5.2.3 Improvement activity

5.2.4 In line with the Government's Housing Pledge, (which aims to assist developers develop), we have increased activities to ensure that funding from the Government's housing pledge is secured for developments in Sunderland, and that affordable housing is developed in the City. So far we have:

- Increased liaison with Housing Associations, regards the housing that are wished to develop,

- Increased dialogue with the HCA, and outlined what our housing priorities are via a strategic process,
- Stepped up the development of the affordable housing policy, which we hope to have drafted by March 2010.
- Considered options for the development of a Local Housing Company, which will facilitate the development of much affordable housing.

5.2.5 Current developments include:

- Gentoo bid to the Homes and Communities Agency for kick start funding was successful. This will result in the erection of 422 dwellings across 5 schemes: Racecourse Estate Houghton, Southwick Phase 4, Doxford Park 3a & 3b, Castletown and Chilton Moor). All sites have already been cleared. The schemes must be on site by March 2010 and completed by March 2011.
- Extra Care Housing development at the Racecourse Estate in Houghton will be developed in partnership with Gentoo and includes extra care accommodation providing 47 two bedroom mixed tenure properties (40 apartments and 7 bungalows), for independent living with access to tailored care and support if required, and communal facilities.
- Implementation of the Easington Lane Development Framework
- Extra Care Housing development at Silksworth developed in partnership with Housing 21 providing 40 two bedroom mixed tenure apartments for independent living, with access to tailored care and support, if required.
- Extra Care Housing development at Columbia, Washington, providing 39 two bedroom mixed tenure apartments for independent living
- Developed in partnership with Housing 21, Extra Care Housing development at Hetton, providing 48 two bedroom mixed tenure apartments for independent living
- Central area developments include:
 - Stadium Village Masterplan
 - St Peters Riverside Masterplan
 - Farringdon Row Interim Masterplan
 - Holmeside Triangle

5.2.6 To supplement current activity in terms of building affordable homes the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee is undertaking a Policy Review to investigate current practices and policies across the city in relation to the way in which people access housing in Sunderland and suggest ways in which improvements could be made. The key driver for the review is looking at how people access the housing that we already have, focussing mainly on social housing, and ensuring that access to it is as clear and equitable as it can be so that the best outcomes for customers are achieved. The key terms of reference are:

- To provide a national and local context to the availability of housing in the City;
- To consider the current ways by which people access social housing in the City;

- To identify and highlight the issues relating to how people access housing in the City;
- To look at what services are available to support people to access housing;
- To investigate how the Council and its partners work together;
- To look at the potential impact of Choice Based Lettings on how people access housing;
- To ensure that a single route in to housing is attained so that improved customer outcomes are achieved;
- To consider examples of best practice and innovative provision from local authorities and other key stakeholders across the country in relation to access to housing.

5.2.7 Progress will be reported to Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee throughout the course of the review and Policy Review recommendations will strengthen shorter term support mechanisms to improve access to housing.

5.3 In terms of other national indicators the following performance is of note.

The Council's and city's approach to homelessness is divided into 3 areas:

- *"Homelessness Prevention"*: Providing appropriate information, advice and support to individuals and families earlier to reduce their risk of homelessness before these individuals become accepted;
- *"Statutory Homelessness Acceptance"*: This refers to those individuals and families to which the Council has statutory responsibilities in relation to homelessness, housing advice and housing allocations within the Acts discussed above;
- *"Using Temporary Accommodation"*: This refers to the statutory homelessness acceptance cases of families and individuals that need to access temporary accommodation and are then supported to identify and move to more permanent accommodation solutions in the city.

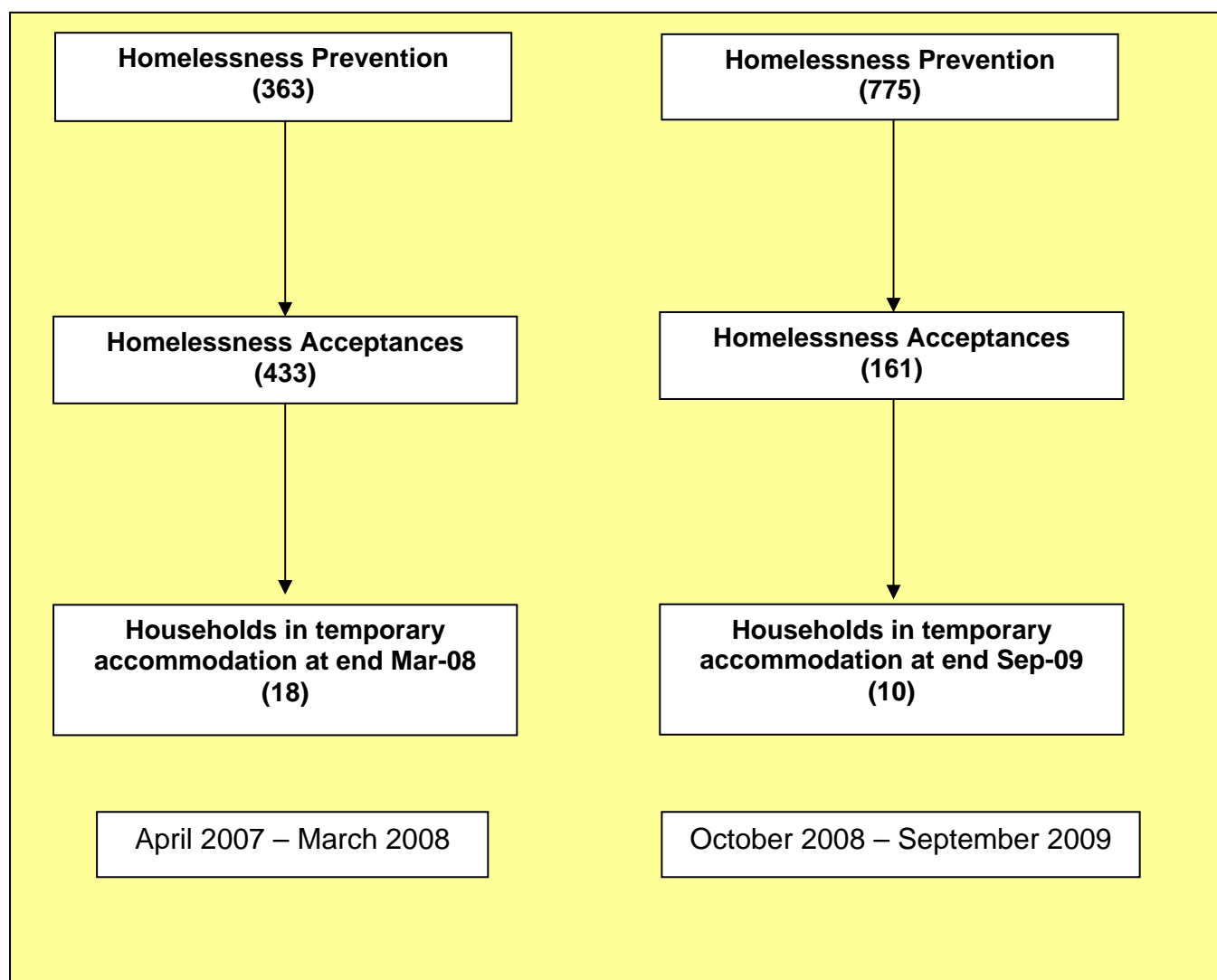
5.3.1 Reducing the risk of homelessness remains a high priority for the Council and city. The key objective of the Council in this area is a focus on more preventative solutions earlier than more complex interventions, e.g. use of temporary accommodation, through its statutory powers later, and the Council made a significant investment in more preventative advice, information and support for people with housing and financial problems, particularly through the current economic recession. This includes through the implementation of a more integrated and holistic Strategic Advice Plan, and additional investment in homelessness prevention services, including officers now providing home visits to individuals at risk of homelessness and work with private landlords to support individuals' tenancies.

5.3.2 Performance-related objectives are therefore to make sure that as many individuals/families at risk of homelessness as possible have appropriate and effective preventative advice as possible, whilst the number of individuals/families as "statutory acceptance cases" and those in temporary accommodation should be minimised, either because appropriate solutions are

identified at an earlier stage or, for those that need temporary accommodation, more permanent move on arrangements are identified.

5.3.3 Figure 1 shows progress in achieving these objectives diagrammatically. As it shows, the number of preventative cases increased substantially between the 12 month periods ending March 2008 and September 2009, but the number of people statutorily accepted as homeless decreased and did the number of people in temporary accommodation (NI 156), with no young people aged below 18 now in temporary B&B accommodation. All of this indicates positive progress towards the city's performance objectives in this area.

**Figure 1 – Comparison of Homelessness Performance Objectives
(Figures in brackets are number of cases)**



5.3.4 Although the acceptances and prevention indicators continue to exceed the targets set for 2008/09 (both retained as local indicators), the Council recognises that it needs to build on its strong performance to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation (NI 156) - its target is no more than 5 households in this accommodation for the end of 2008/09, in line with its original CLG target, so further progress needs to be made in the

remainder of the year. This includes in terms of making sure that there are fewer vulnerable households (e.g. those with dependents) in bed and breakfast accommodation (often the least favourable temporary accommodation solution) for shorter periods of time. In fact, there was just 1 such household in these solutions at the end of September, with no young people aged below 18 currently in B&B accommodation, although the average length of stay in this accommodation (between 4 – 5 weeks) increased during 2009/10.

- 5.3.5 It's to further build on good progress thus far, and to support pressures placed on households as a result of the economic downturn, that one of the Council's Business Improvement Projects relates to reducing the risk of homelessness through a more holistic approach to supporting individuals.

5.4 Former BV 64: The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority

- 5.4.1 Performance against this local indicator is currently 108 for the first six months of 2008, and is currently projected to achieve an outturn position of no more than 275 dwellings for 2009/10, against a target of 375. Clearly, this is disappointing, and the Council will seek to accelerate progress in the remaining months of the current financial year and in 2010/11. To support this, the Council is developing an Empty Properties Action Plan that will seek to "segment" the issues and risks associated with vacant properties (e.g. geographically poor fit between available households and demand, market forces, including landlords unable to let etc.) and identify appropriate actions, based on extensive research already undertaken. One of the key issues will be to explore more preventative approach with partners to ensure that longer-term vacant properties become less of an issue in the first place – the majority Area Committees have highlighted empty properties as an area to tackle.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 That the committee considers the continued good progress made by the council and the Sunderland Partnership, as described in the CAA reports, and those areas requiring further development to ensure that performance is actively managed.

7.0 Background papers

Area assessment report – Sunderland

Organisational assessment report – Sunderland City Council

Use of resources report – Sunderland City Council