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This circular is	For information	No response required	
This circular is	Relevant to the National Framework		
Status	This circular provides links to consultations and other documents on the new local government agenda which are of relevance to the Fire and Rescue Service.		

Key consultations on new local performance framework

Issued by:

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Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer**

Please forward to:

Summary

This circular provides details of consultations and other material related to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, implementing the new Local Area Agreement (LAA) framework set out in the Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* published in October 2006. The circular draws particular attention to the Department's consultation on the technical definitions (including the methodology, frequency of reporting and data sources) underpinning the national indicators - which are replacing the existing Best Value Performance Indicators from April 2008.

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Key consultations on new local performance framework

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities* published in October 2006, signalled a step change in the way local public services are expected to work together. In particular, there are requirements in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to ensure that all partners engage in and deliver on a shared agenda for their communities, through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP).
- 1.2 Upper tier and unitary local authorities will have a duty to consult 'named partners', including Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) when preparing the action plan for their area - the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Each LAA will include a maximum of 35 priority improvement targets for the local area, to be agreed by the relevant regional Government Office. The targets will be negotiated between the LSP partners. These targets will be drawn from a set of 198 national indicators agreed as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.

2.0 National Indicator Set

- 2.1 The list of 198 indicators can be found on the Department's website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator>

There are a number of indicators in the national set which are of relevance to FRAs of which two are of particular importance:

NI 33 - Arson incidents (deliberate fires); and

NI 49 - Number of primary fires and related fatalities and non-fatal casualties, excluding precautionary checks.

- 2.2 The Government is consulting on the detailed definitions of the set, seeking views on the methodology, frequency of reporting and data source for each indicator. For both of these indicators the data source is existing statistical returns Fire and Rescue Authorities already make to the Department and the existing definition for deliberate primary and secondary fires will be used for national indicator 33. The consultation on the draft Handbook of Definitions is running until 21 December. The full version of the Handbook as well as individual sections (both 'fire' indicators are in Annex C1) are available for downloading at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/indicatorsdefinitions>

- 2.3 A response form is also provided at the same web-link for responding to the consultation. Separate forms need to be completed for each indicator on which comments are being made.
- 2.4 It would be helpful if any FRAs responding to the consultation could send a copy of their responses to me at: gillian.verrall@communities.gsi.gov.uk

3.0 Other Directly Related Publications and Consultations

3.1 Publication of three key documents supporting the White Paper agenda was announced by Ministers at the third annual conference on LAAs on 21st November:

1. **Core Narrative, entitled ‘An introduction to the new local performance framework – delivering better outcomes for local people’.** This document, jointly produced with the LGA, explains the rationale for the new LAA framework and an overview of each of its core elements. The document is available on the Department’s website at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localperformanceframework

The core narrative will be supported by a package of introductory narratives tailored to specific sectors and issues, including one for the Fire and Rescue Service. These sector narratives will also be published in November/December on the Communities and Local Government website.

2. **Operational guidance, entitled ‘Development of the new local area agreement framework – operational guidance 2007’.** This is the second phase of operational guidance to support the negotiation of LAAs by June 2008. It highlights the importance of agreeing shared priorities, a timetable for implementation and the new arrangements for area based grant. It also includes an overview of arrangements for Multi-Area Agreements. This guidance is available at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/laaoperationalguidance

3. **Statutory guidance, entitled ‘Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities’.** This is a consultation draft on the duties under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act. It sets out how the new legislation will enable the development of effective LAAs and sustainable community strategies; ensure effective consultation with local communities through the ‘duty to involve’ and involvement of local partners, including FRAs, through the ‘duty to co-operate’. This consultation draft is available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/statutoryguidance>

3.2 To support FRAs in delivering the new LAA agenda, the Department intends to publish a toolkit on partnership working and LAA targets early in the New Year.

4.0 Audit Commission Consultation

4.1 The Audit Commission’s latest consultation document on Comprehensive Area Assessment (replacing Comprehensive Performance Assessment) was published on 19 November. This is available on the Commission’s website: www.audit-commission.gov.uk

5.0 National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy Framework

- 5.1 Central and Local Government have committed to developing a new, joint approach to supporting excellent performance which is owned and driven forward by local authorities (LAs) and their partners. The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy Framework will be published early in 2008.
- 5.2 Provisional Grant Settlement
- 5.3 The proposed provisional grant settlement for local government, including FRAs, will be announced in late November/early December.

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