

The guidance emphasises that JSNA should be taken into account by the local authority and its partners in preparing the Sustainable Community Strategy as part of a strengthened commitment to local priorities.

For the purpose of JSNA, a clear distinction is made between individual and population need. JSNA examines aggregated assessment of need and should not be used for identifying need at the individual level.

Specifically, JSNA is a tool to identify groups where needs are not being met and that are experiencing poor outcomes. JSNA is seen as a continuous process to facilitate:

- an understanding of the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the population in the short term (three to five years) - in order to inform Local Area Agreements - and in the longer term (five to ten years) to inform strategic planning
- the commissioning of services and interventions to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities.

We know that carrying out a successful Joint Strategic Needs Assessment will be challenging – joint working arrangements vary around the country, not all identified needs can be met, and there may be technical difficulties, including those around sharing information. However, much of the relevant work is already happening and most areas are already carrying out substantial elements of Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

In particular, JSNA will address those outcomes described in both the National Indicator Set (NIS) for local authorities and local authority partnerships, and the ‘vital signs’ referred to in “The NHS in England: The Operating Framework for 2008/09”.

The government will look for evidence that commissioning decisions have been informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

According to the guidance, each JSNA will be unique and will reflect local circumstances, leading to more detailed analyses of the issues identified. The published findings of the JSNA will be a concise summary of the main health and well-being needs of a community as opposed to a large, technical document.

The guidance includes a section (annex ‘A1’) on tools and resources to support JSNA, for example tools to engage communities; for identifying current and future need, and to support commissioners.

Annex ‘B’ to the guidance is the ‘core data set’. Work on the core dataset is ongoing and will be refined as JSNA develops. The latest version of the core dataset can be accessed at: www.ypho.org.uk/commissioning_JSNA.aspx;

World Class Commissioning (WCC) was published on 3 December 2007 and is the latest vision from DH for PCT commissioning. It states that PCTs are primarily commissioning bodies responsible for leading the health and well-being of the local population. www.dh.gov.uk/en/Policyandguidance/Organisationpolicy/Commissioning/worldclasscommissioning/index.htm

The NHS Operating Framework for 2008/9 was published on 13th December 2007 and sets out the health and service priorities for the NHS, enabling strategies, the financial regime and business processes. www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_081094