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## Who we are

The CRC has the following three key functions:

- Rural advocate – the voice for rural people, businesses and communities.
- Expert adviser – giving evidence-based, objective advice to government and others.
- Independent watchdog – monitoring, reporting on and seeking to mainstream rural into the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally.

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## Further information

For further information about this project please contact the CRC's Rural Governance team on 01242 534060 or email [info@ruralcommunities.gov.uk](mailto:info@ruralcommunities.gov.uk)

### **Commission for Rural Communities**

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Commission for  
Rural Communities

Tackling rural disadvantage

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A truly local view:  
locality reporting  
against the national  
indicator set

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## Background

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are the primary delivery agreement between central government and local authorities and their partners to improve the quality of life for local people over a three year period.

LAAs are a key feature of a more devolved central/local settlement. Through them, different localities can channel public resources towards the priorities of their own areas, in support of and alongside national Public Service Agreement outcomes and targets.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and upper level councils – unitary and county – have agreed up to 35 improvement targets from a selection of over 170 National Indicators that best reflect the priorities set out in their Sustainable Community Strategy. The 35 targets are negotiated between local authorities and Government Offices (on behalf of Government departments) and are set out in the LAA.

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## What is local?

The geography of local government is enormously varied. LAAs cover large administrative areas and will report on outcomes at the upper tier level. They are not required to break down performance to a lower geographical level.

However, reporting on outcomes using indicators at the higher geographical scale can mask great variation, both in policy needs and policy outcomes. Working with, and being accountable to, communities and neighbourhoods requires intelligence at a finer spatial level.

Indeed, participants in the Department of Communities and Local Government's LAA road shows run in 2007 sent a strong message from two tier areas that many policy initiatives are a much better fit for unitary areas than they are for two tier areas. This helps support moves to disaggregate NI data to below LAA level to help make this data meaningful to all tiers of local government and to local people themselves.

Reference - Local Area Agreements Road Shows Report April 2007  
Department for Communities and Local Government: London June 2007

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## The solution?

The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) recognises the importance of reporting on delivery outcomes at the lower spatial level, as a means of promoting proportionate outcomes for rural communities. As a result, we have commissioned some work that:

- analyses the extent to which the National Indicator Set can be disaggregated to a lower-than-LAA spatial level;
- tests out the practicalities of disaggregated reporting at this lower level with some case study areas;
- sets out the benefits of such lower level reporting; and
- brings this together in a set of support and 'how to' material.

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## The headlines

Around two-thirds of the data used by the national indicator set is available at a lower-than-LAA level. Specifically, this can be broken down to:

- local authority district – which will be important in two tier areas, where the LAA operates at the county level;

- rural:urban – whether the indicator data can be matched to the official definition of urban and rural areas; and
- neighbourhood – whether the indicator data is available at or can be matched to local authority wards or similarly sized locality geography eg postcodes, grid references or super output areas.

To test out the practicalities of smaller area reporting, we are working with three Local Strategic Partnerships in Essex, Cumbria and Devon to develop a series of case studies, each focussing on a different National Indicator or series of indicators, showing how the partnership has focused their activity at a more local level and analysing their experience.

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## Finding out more

The results of this work are published in partnership with the IDEa. This includes:

- a set of searchable tables, for each of the National Indicators, which contain the technical analysis of the potential to disaggregate the data;
- a 'how to guide' for LSPs and councils who want to explore how to disaggregate the data;
- a narrative on why local reporting is important and useful for LSPs and local authorities (and for the communities they serve); and
- the experiences of Essex, Cumbria and Devon in testing out this disaggregated reporting.

For further information, please see [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk) or [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)