



Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future

An Analysis of Consultation Responses



Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future

An Analysis of Consultation Responses

Ipsos MORI

October 2006
Communities and Local Government

An independent report undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Communities and Local Government

On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government

Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
Telephone: 020 7944 4400
Website: www.communities.gov.uk

© *Queen's Printer and Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2006*

Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.

This publication, excluding logos, may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium for research, private study or for internal circulation within an organisation. This is subject to it being reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the publication specified.

Any other use of the contents of this publication would require a copyright licence. Please apply for a Click-Use Licence for core material at www.opsi.gov.uk/click-use/system/online/pLogin.asp, or by writing to the Office of Public Sector Information, Information Policy Team, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich, NR3 1BQ.
Fax: 01603 723000 or email: HMSOlicensing@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

If you require this publication in an alternative format please email alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Communities and Local Government for DCLG Publications
PO Box 236
Wetherby
West Yorkshire
LS23 7NB
Tel: 08701 226 236
Fax: 08701 226 237
Textphone: 08701 207 405
Email: communities@twoten.com
or online via the Communities and Local Government for DCLG website: www.communities.gov.uk

Printed in the UK on material containing no less than 75% post-consumer waste.

October 2006

Product Code: 06LGPD04008

Contents

Introduction	5
Executive Summary	9
Theme 1: LSPs, Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements	10
Theme 2: Regional/Sub-regional Engagement	14
Theme 3: Links to Local Plans	17
Theme 4: Development of Sustainable Community Strategies	20
Theme 5: Neighbourhood Engagement	23
Theme 6: Links with the Local Development Framework	27
Theme 7: Two-tier Areas	31
Theme 8: LSP as the Partnership of Partnerships	35
Theme 9: Ensuring Wide Representation	43
Theme 10: Providing Legislative Foundation	47
Theme 11: Accountability between Partners	56
Theme 12: Involvement of Local Councillors	59
Theme 13: Involvement of Members of Parliament	63
Theme 14: Involvement of Communities Served	65
Theme 15: Capacity Issues	69
Appendices	76

Introduction

Background and objectives

This report outlines the findings of the questionnaire included in the *Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future* consultation document. The analysis was conducted by Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute for Communities and Local Government.

This consultation was launched on 8th December and was completed on 3rd March. Its main objective was to gather the views of a range of stakeholders on how best to promote effective local partnership working and cross-sector planning.

The key audiences for the consultation were existing LSP coordinators and chairs, key local service providers (Primary Care Trust managers, Jobcentre Plus district managers, local authority chief executives etc.) and their voluntary, community and private sector partners. The consultation picked up on recent key policy initiatives which affect local partnership working including, in particular, Local Area Agreements and Local Development Frameworks.

Aims of the Consultation

This consultation examines the role, governance and capacity of LSPs and Community Strategies both in terms of short-term changes and more radical longer-term adjustments.

Its core objectives are set out below:

- To understand the level of commitment amongst central government departments, regional organisations and local partners to the LSP system of partnerships and the Sustainable Community Strategy as the over-arching local plan;
- To investigate an evolved role for the local authority including local authority members in facilitating action through the LSP and Sustainable Community Strategy;
- To assess the feasibility of LSPs being able to effectively identify and deliver against the priorities for joint action in their area through the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Local Development Framework in a clearly accountable way;
- To understand how LSPs can be better able to support neighbourhood engagement and to help ensure that the views of neighbourhoods and parish councils can influence strategic local service delivery and spending;

And;

- To investigate how effective, transparent and accountable governance and scrutiny arrangements for LSPs can be achieved.

Methodology

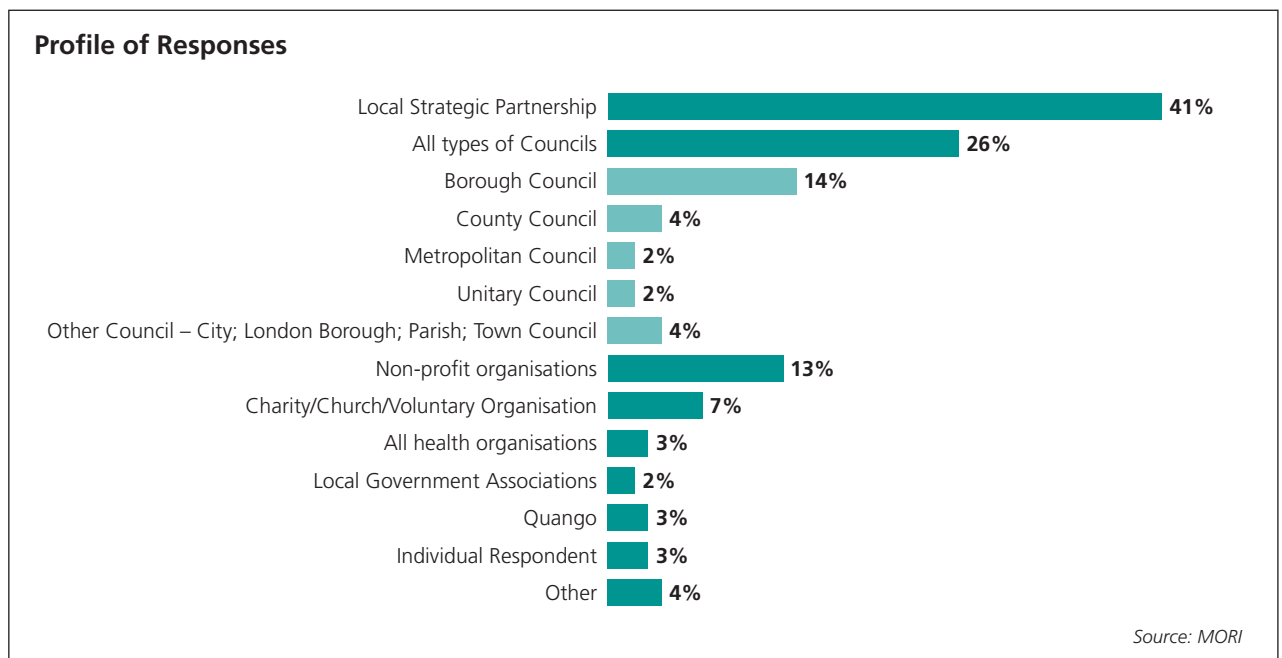
The questionnaire was designed by the Communities and Local Government. It consisted of 35 open-ended questions and was split into four sections according to theme. The four themes were: ‘The role of LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies’; ‘Governance of LSPs’; ‘Effective accountability arrangements’; and ‘Developing the capacity of LSPs’. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendices to this report.

The questionnaire was distributed by Communities and Local Government to a wide range of individuals and organisations that were considered to have a particular interest and expertise in this subject area. The main groups that the survey sought responses from were:

- LSP coordinators and chairs;
- Key local service providers;
- Central and local government;
- Voluntary and community sector organisations;
- Private sector organisations.

Profile of respondents

A total of 580 responses were received within the fieldwork period between December 2005 and March 2006. Responses from a range of organisations are set out below.



Data processing and analysis

On completion of fieldwork, questionnaires were processed by Framework UK, one of Ipsos MORI's approved data-processing suppliers. Lists of pre-code categories were created for the open-ended questions, based on an interim analysis of the survey results. The initial data-processing of results were based on these pre-code categories. When the 'others' category represented over 10% of the responses to any question, new response categories were created and coded for these 'others' responses. Data is not weighted.

Interpretation of the data

Given the self-selecting nature of this consultation we urge caution when interpreting the findings, as those who responded may not necessarily be representative of the various groups and organisations that the Communities and Local Government sought to consult. We also urge caution that many of the sub-groups contained within the findings are based on small base sizes, and are included to provide context only. Such sub-groups are indicative, rather than statistically significant.

Please note that caution should be exercised when comparing percentages derived from base sizes of 99 respondents or fewer, and particularly when comparing percentages derived from base sizes of 30 respondents or fewer. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due the fact that multiple answers were allowed.

It is also worth pointing out that this survey deals with respondents' *perceptions* at the time the survey was conducted *rather than facts*. Respondents' perceptions, therefore, may not accurately represent the actual state of affairs regarding LSPs. However, they do provide an indication of common issues relating to LSPs and the consultation paper's suggestions for their future direction.

Publication of data

As with all our studies, these findings are subject to Ipsos MORI's Standard Terms & Conditions of Contract. Any press release or publication of the findings of this survey requires the advance approval of Ipsos MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misinterpretation.

Report structure

This report follows the structure of the questionnaire and analyses responses in terms of 15 key themes:

1. LSPs, Sustainable Community Strategies and LAAs;
2. Regional/sub-regional engagement;
3. Links to local plans;
4. Sustainable Community Strategies;
5. Neighbourhood Engagement;

6. Links with the Local Development Framework;
7. Two-tier areas;
8. LSP as the partnership of partnerships;
9. Ensuring wide representation;
10. Providing a legislative foundation;
11. Accountability between partners;
12. Involvement of local councillors;
13. Involvement of Members of Parliament;
14. Involvement of communities served;
15. Capacity issues

These have been analysed question-by-question for ease of comparison to the original questionnaire. However, the executive summary highlights the key themes and messages that have emerged throughout. For each theme, background information from the consultation paper is included first, followed by an analysis of the results. Verbatim examples from responses are also included as are examples of case studies that help to illustrate issues raised in the consultation responses.

Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Catherine Doherty, Alison Lyon, Paul Whittlesea, Andrew Jordan and Geoff Garrett of Communities and Local Government for their help and advice in developing this project. Special thanks also go to the 580 respondents who took part in this consultation.

Executive Summary

Key messages from the consultation responses

Overall, it appears that the proposals within the consultation paper have been positively received.

There are a number of recurrent concerns that responding organisations have. These are namely:

- To ensure that any future proposals, duties or mandatory requirements are fit-for-purpose and appropriate for all types of LSP (from districts to county councils);
- Proposals, duties or mandatory requirements are flexible enough to allow individual areas to tailor them to suit the unique nuances of their area;
- To ensure that proposals, duties or mandatory requirements are adequately resourced (in terms of finance and staff time) so that both LSPs in Neighbourhood Renewal Fund areas and those who do not receive any government funding are able to fulfil them.

Lastly, in terms of moving forward, it appears that organisations would appreciate learning from their peers in the form of good-practice examples. Government-produced materials (as well as those from NGOs) are also called for, but they request that these are not long-winded and do not duplicate guidance already produced. There is a lot more detail, particularly around good practice, contained in the responses to this consultation, which it was not possible to include in this quantitative analysis. Therefore, we would recommend that Communities and Local Government undertakes some form of internal exercise to capture this knowledge and experience.

Note on the presentation of the data:

The tables below show a breakdown of responses for the respondents **who chose to answer any particular question**: e.g. 488 respondents answered Q1. Throughout the report, all analysis is based only on those who answered a particular question, not all 580 responses.

All questions were open-ended and allowed respondents to give **multiple responses**: therefore the percentages of different responses will not always sum to 100 and will often be higher. It should also be noted that the questions were also **'open'**, whereby no structure was applied to responses. For example, at Q1, 359 respondents (74% of those answering Q1) stated that they agreed with the proposed role of the LSP. However, it cannot be inferred from this that the remaining 25% necessarily *disagreed* with the proposed role (as responses were not restricted to just 'agree' or 'disagree').

Theme 1: LSPs, Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements

Question 1 on consultation paper: *Do you agree that the key role of the LSP should be to develop the vision for the local area through the sustainable community strategy and the 'delivery contract' through the LAA?*

Background in Consultation Document

The consultation paper's vision for the role of the LSP is that it takes the strategic lead in the locality by bringing together the views of the local partners, including (critically) representatives of the private, voluntary and community sectors, with national, regional, and neighbourhood or parish priorities in developing the Sustainable Community Strategy. The strategy would set out the vision and priorities for the area with the Local Area Agreement defining the detailed outcomes, which will be part of the Sustainable Community Strategy's action plan.

The LSP must take an oversight role, ensuring that the lines of responsibility between partners and thematic sub-partnerships are clear and that duplication is avoided. In essence, the LSP needs to be the 'partnership of partnerships' encompassing all thematic partnerships in the area.

The Role of LSPs

There is clear agreement amongst respondents in favour of the proposed role for LSPs. Specifically, just under three-quarters (74%) agree, and this level of agreement is fairly consistent amongst the various sub-groups of respondents. Groups most likely to agree are respondents in areas receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) and those responding on behalf of LSPs.

Views on the role of LSPs at Q1	No. (Base = 488)	%
Yes, agree in principle	359	74
No, do not agree	7	1
A range of issues were raised:		
(LAA) needs to consider local needs/issues/priorities	147	30
Clarity of issues/roles & responsibilities for each level defined	92	19
District/local issues not covered in 2-tier LAA	69	14
Should not be only delivery method/need other options	32	7
LSPs too young/not yet developed/need to evolve more fully	39	8

It is important to note that at this point (and for all other questions in the survey) 74% agreement does not necessarily mean that 26% disagree with the proposal. The questions are not designed for simple 'yes' or 'no' answers: they are left open for the respondents to answer as they wish. Only seven respondents (1%) express outright disagreement with the

proposed role. What can be inferred from these results is that 74% are unequivocal in their support for the proposed role, and that 1% are steadfastly against it. The remaining 25% can be classified as ambivalent, undecided or see both advantages and disadvantages to the proposals in the consultation document.

Over three-in-ten (31%) of district council respondents feel that 2-tier LAAs do not adequately cover local issues or issues relevant at a community level. This is far higher than both the overall figure for all respondents (14%) and the proportion of county council respondents who say the same (19%). However, this shows that district council respondents have stronger concerns about the proposed role than other groups, but does not mean that they are significantly less likely to agree to the proposed role. In fact, agreement in this group stands at 67%.

The potential for friction between district and county LSPs is well illustrated by the following response :

Local Area Agreements have yet to fully gel with district LSPs at present because they are county-based. Some guidance is required here [in the LAA process] if the potential strengths of district LSPs are to be maintained.

National Association of Local Councils

When we look at the responses of the 129 who **do not explicitly agree**, we can see that their key concern before they can fully accept the proposed role for LSPs as a whole is that the LAA needs to reflect local priorities and issues followed by a desire for clarification of the roles and responsibilities at each level of an LSP.

Key issues for those who <i>do not explicitly agree</i> to the proposed LSP structure at Q1:		
Base: 129 respondents who do not say “yes, agree in principle” at Q1	<i>n</i>	%
(LAA) needs to consider local needs/issues/priorities	48	37
Clarity of issues/responsibility for each level defined	35	27
District/local issues not covered in 2-tier LAA	25	19
LSPs too young/not yet developed/need to evolve more fully	18	14
Need partnership working	9	7
4 blocks do not cover everything	11	9
Should not be only delivery method/need other options	7	5
Environment consideration/left out environment	5	4
Lack of resources/more resources needed	7	5
Lack of guidance/more guidance needed	5	4
Accountability Issues (all mentions)	2	2
Need communication/feedback	3	2

Looking at the views of those who **explicitly agree** with the proposed role, it is apparent that these respondents share the same concerns about what needs to be done to make the proposals work. Although they agree in principal, almost three in ten of this group show concern about the mechanics of two-tier working. Specifically, 14% have the concern that responsibilities for each level need to be clearly defined. A further 13% feel that local issues specific to districts may not be adequately accounted for in a two-tier LAA.

Key issues for those who agree to the proposed LSP structure at Q1:		
Base: respondents saying “yes, agree in principle” at Q1	<i>n</i>	%
(LAA) needs to consider local needs/issues/priorities	92	30
Clarity of issues/responsibility for each level defined	44	14
District/local issues not covered in 2-tier LAA	41	13
Should not be only delivery method/need other options	23	7
4 blocks do not cover everything	21	7
Lack of resources/more resources needed	20	6
LSPs too young/not yet developed/need to evolve more fully	15	5
Environment consideration/left out environment	12	4
Accountability Issues (all mentions)	7	2
LAA Delivery Contract must include all sections of the community	7	2
Lack of guidance/more guidance needed	6	2
Need partnership working	5	2
Need flexibility	2	1
Need communication/feedback	1	1
Need support	1	1

The Local Government Association's position:

There needs to be a significant change of gear in local partnership working, and in the relationship of such partnerships to local councils. The LGA vision continues to be one of partnerships able to make an impact, integrated with local political leadership and scrutiny arrangements, and delivering better outcomes for local people.

Without such a change of gear, the progress beginning to be made on Local Area Agreements and joined-up public service delivery will be at threat.

This change of gear should continue to be evolutionary and driven from localities, rather than one-size-fits-all and imposed. LSPs across the country are not starting from anything like the same baseline. While pace must pick up overall, what happens next should still allow for development at different speeds in different places.

The direction of travel should be towards more robust governance for LSPs, proportionate to their expanding role and influence, and with democratic accountability embedded.

The LGA have produced a thorough and detailed response to the consultation that makes many recommendations. The LGA response is informed by input from its member authorities, by discussions at a number of recent conferences, seminars, and workshops, and by member-level discussions at LGA boards and task groups. It also reflects substantive discussions with the IDeA, particularly in relation to experience from LAAs.

Theme 2: Regional/Sub-regional Engagement

Question 2 on consultation paper: *We believe it is important that LSPs reflect regional /sub-regional plans where relevant in their Sustainable Community Strategy priorities and that regional organisations and partnerships take account of key local needs. How can this greater coordination best be facilitated?*

Background in Consultation Document

To be effective – and genuinely sustainable – a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), should influence, and be influenced by, the content of other key local, regional and sub-regional plans. There are significant benefits to be gained by planning and delivering policy beyond local authority boundaries in a way that corresponds to the functioning geographies of economies and societies. These might include travel-to-work areas, retail catchments, housing market areas and strategic transport links.

It is therefore essential that the Sustainable Community Strategy is developed in a way that fully addresses needs and opportunities across administrative boundaries. As the overarching partnership for a local area, the LSP is ideally placed to facilitate cross-boundary collaboration and communication at the appropriate sub-regional level.

The most common improvement suggested is more effective joint working between LSPs and regional organisations. Other suggestions to facilitate this coordination include improving communications, which could not only encompass focusing on the communications systems themselves, but also on promoting partnership working or information-sharing. There is a small, but not insignificant, minority who feel that the consultation’s proposal cannot be applied to all LSPs and that other options and approaches are required in order to fully account for local needs and circumstances. Also, as we will see throughout this report, there is a demand for more guidance and clarification on how the proposal should be put into practice. There is also a general feeling that regional bodies are not locally focussed or aware of local needs.

Views on facilitation of regional/Sub-regional Engagement at Q2	No. (Base = 409)	%
LSPs need to work with regional/sub-regional bodies	184	45
Regional bodies need to consider local needs	172	42
LSPs need to be for local issues	107	26
Generally improve communication	64	16
One size does not fit all/need other options	30	7
Top-down planning loses touch with local needs	26	6
LSPs need to be flexible	20	5
Relevant people/partnerships having regular meetings	19	5
Needs guidance/clarification	16	4

The Learning and Skills Council's view:

The LSC believe it is important for LSPs to work under the umbrella of regional and sub-regional plans and that they can help to set out the vision of the key partner agencies who own those plans.

This helps to set the context for the priorities of the partners under which more local priorities naturally sit. For example, the Learning and Skills Council is currently working on the London Learning and Skills Plan which is underpinned by the North London LSC Annual Plan. It is particularly useful to reflect regional plans in a region like London, which in many instances, has similar issues across-the-board.

To better coordinate this facilitation, they think that LSPs should be provided with key local and regional plans of all partner organisations. This should be the responsibility of the key individuals who represent their respective organisations on the LSPs.

Maidstone LSP's view:

Maidstone believes that, in practice, with such a hierarchy of plans, LSPs at district level find it difficult to respond to all the plethora of plans and strategies at national, regional, county and then neighbouring district levels. In order to set out a local vision, Maidstone LSP suggests that LSPs will also need to give greater regard to neighbourhood or parish plans and priorities to create a genuinely bottom-up vision.

LSPs need to be able to develop plans that may be at odds with regional plans where they disagree, or where local priorities differ. Where districts have more influence, there tends to be more accord, but again, at a county level, there may be disagreement on priorities. This tension allows for a dialogue between the tiers, but the more tiers, the more time is spent trying to ensure that the district/neighbourhood voice is heard.

Association of London Government's view

The introduction of a statutory requirement by the Government for key regional and sub-regional agencies to engage and participate in the LSP structures will enable the LSP to:

- *Develop integrated and sustainable community strategies that incorporate a wider regional and sub-regional approach;*
- *Facilitate joint working at a local, sub-regional and regional level;*
- *Access intelligence and data at all levels.*

However, it is crucial that the LSP has the flexibility to develop a partnership model and structure appropriate to its locality. The Government should set the wider legislative parameters and frameworks but allow LSPs the flexibility to tailor these to local requirements.

East of England Development Agency's view:

In order to ensure that LSPs are able to make stronger links to regional policy EEDA is committed to supporting their role in the future. It is not EEDA's role to build the capacity of LSPs. However, there are a number of ways that EEDA can achieve improved policy coherence between regional and sub-regional levels. This could include:

- *Working with the Government Office for the region and the Regional Assembly in better understanding the potential of LSPs, the challenges they face and the opportunities that flow from them.*
- *Supporting greater linkages sub-regionally between LSPs and EEDA's sub-regional partners, including developing clearer pathways for engagement and strengthening the requirement for our sub-regional partnerships to actively engage. This could include developing a local compact agreement setting out expectations for engagement.*
- *Support for community leadership programmes to ensure that members of LSPs have the skills to develop long-term strategic investment planning processes that lead to long-term sustainable development in the region's economy.*

East Midlands Development Agency points to some good practice in the Sub-Regional Strategic Partnership:

A leading example of an effective working model has been adopted by one of EMDA's SSP's – the Welland Partnership. It has successfully made this connection by bringing together the economic development partnerships of the five constituent LSPs within the Welland sub-region to action plan the economic development strategy.

Theme 3: Links to Local Plans

Question 3 on consultation paper: *Would a requirement on bodies producing theme or service-based plans to 'have regard' to the Sustainable Community Strategy in doing so and vice versa, increase the LSP's ability to take the over-arching view in an area?*

Background in Consultation Document

The Sustainable Community Strategy adds value in an area by being the over-arching plan and by drawing out those key priorities and actions that require a collaborative approach. It was always envisaged that the Community Strategy would perform this role. However, in practice – and often as a result of centrally-set target regimes – individual agencies or thematic partnerships have developed many local plans entirely separately and the key actions are not picked up in the Community Strategy. To help ensure the most effective and transparent allocation of resources in the locality, the LSP may wish to consider setting up mechanisms for individual partners to share performance data and levels of resourcing.

Most agree that if bodies producing theme or service-based plans consider the SCS in their plans, this would facilitate the LSP's ability to take a strategic view of an area. Just fewer than one-in-ten of those responding to this question say they already have such arrangements in place. 13% feel it is important to formalise cooperation through legislation and hence argue that such a duty would need enforcing. Similarly, 8% do not.

Views on links to Local Plans at Q3	No. (Base = 375)	%
Yes/would be beneficial/ideally	231	62
Needs partnership/cooperation/sharing	80	21
Ensures consistency of approach/reduces duplication	28	7
Already do/in place	23	6
On the subject of putting a duty to cooperate:¹		
A duty to cooperate needs enforcing/policing	48	13
No – a duty to cooperate should not be mandatory	31	8

Looking at the respondents who expressed a positive view on the duty to cooperate, we can see that they also feel that in order for this proposal to work, greater partnership working and cooperation is needed and it may also be beneficial to enforce or police the changes in order to maximise their chances of success.

¹ Despite this question being phrased as a *requirement to have regard* to the SCS, respondents mostly answered this question in terms of their views on a "duty to cooperate".

Key issues for those who agree with the proposed links to local plans at Q3		
Base: 231 respondents saying “yes, would be beneficial/ideally” at Q3	<i>n</i>	%
Needs partnership/cooperation/sharing	32	14
Duty to cooperate – needs enforcing/policing	14	6
Ensures consistency of approach/reduces duplication	13	6
Already do/in place	11	5
Clarification of what is meant/entailed is required	8	3
Lack of resources/need more resources	5	2
Duty to cooperate should not be mandatory/required	5	2
Monitoring arrangements should be in place and clear account	1	1

If we analyse those who *did not* explicitly agree with the consultation’s proposals to link theme or service bases plans to the SCS, it is interesting to look at the specific concerns that they have. The strongest are the need for adequate cooperation and enforcement in order to make the plans work. Other key concerns are that cooperation should remain voluntary and that more resources are needed.

Key issues for those who do not explicitly agree with the proposed links to local plans at Q3		
Base: 144 respondents who do not say “yes, would be beneficial/ideally” at Q3	<i>n</i>	%
Needs partnership/cooperation/sharing	48	33
Duty to cooperate – needs enforcing/policing	34	24
Duty to cooperate should not be mandatory/required	25	17
Lack of resources/need more resources	14	10
Already do/in place	11	8
Need clarification	5	3
Monitoring arrangements are needed/need clear accountability for actions	4	3

As stated above, the suggestion that plans and strategies should ‘have regard’ to the local SCS is generally well received: however, some stress the practical implications of this.

There is clearly a need to have a full and comprehensive understanding of the range of demands in relation to priorities and targets, which may make this be seen as an additional pressure, which may crowd the landscape further instead of coordinating it.

Association of Police Authorities

At the moment there is a real weakness in the system, as only local authorities have to demonstrate this duty and only local authorities are assessed on partnership working in their Comprehensive Performance Assessment. This means that there can be organisational difficulties in encouraging local partners outside of the local authority to take some ownership and responsibility for the community strategy and make some contribution to developing the LSP.

The Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)

A formal requirement to 'have regard' to the SCS is unlikely to be sufficient in itself to ensure the LSP takes an over-arching view of an area, as ultimate success of LSPs in aligning plans of partners will depend on achieving a real understanding of mutual benefits, through closer working.

Local Government Association

Definitely, a duty to engage and align plans and strategies with the Sustainable Community Strategy would give it more 'teeth' and more relevance to other agencies. It would help the strategy to be more over-arching and not seen as a 'council plan'.

Cheltenham and Tewkesbury PCT

Theme 4: Development of Sustainable Community Strategies

Question 4 on consultation paper: *Are the proposed steps in the development of a Sustainable Community Strategy correct? (See box on page 18 of consultation paper)*

Question 5 on consultation paper: *What more could be done to ensure Sustainable Community Strategies are better able to make the links between social, economic and environmental goals and to deal more effectively with the area's cross-boundary and longer-term impacts?*

Background in Consultation Document

A Sustainable Community Strategy will need to be developed through a number of stages. We have proposed a series of stages below and would welcome views on these proposals.

1. *Baselining current performance.* – The strategy should outline a long-term vision for the area, using the definition and components of sustainable communities. It will need to be built on robust data available from such sources as the Neighbourhood Statistics and Area Profiles websites, individual local partners, as well as surveys and discussions with local citizens and businesses.
2. *Evidence: analysis of performance and local conditions.* – This vision needs to be explicitly grounded in an analysis of the local area's needs and ideally an understanding of the totality of resources coming into the area.
3. *Local Area Agreements* – the outcomes and targets included in the LAA should reflect this overarching vision.
4. *Revised action plan:* The current Community Strategy Action Plan and the LAA delivery plan will become one and the same.
5. *The Sustainable Community Strategy/LAA Action Plan.* – This should state who is accountable for what actions, with what resources and to what timescale.
6. In line with the LAA review timetable we would expect a Sustainable Community Strategy to be refreshed on an annual basis and reviewed every three years.

The majority of respondents, (just over six-in-ten of those answering this question) agree with the proposed development steps set out for SCS in the consultation document. There is no outright disagreement: however, just over 20 respondents (7%) feel that these steps should be for guidance only and that following them should not be a mandatory requirement.

A key caveat expressed by respondents is that the proposed steps need to make room for more local emphasis and must take local needs into account. This is supported by the fact that respondents from district councils are less likely to agree overall with the proposed steps (53%) than those from county councils (69%) and respondents as a whole (61%).

Views on proposed steps in development of SCS at Q4	No. (Base = 308)	%
Yes, correct	187	61
Need local emphasis/must take local needs into account	84	27
Need more resources/will be resource-intensive	50	16
Need to be more long-term/annual review period too short	32	10
Proposed steps not well defined/not distinct/needs clarification	31	10
Baselines differ/not the same from all areas/different priorities	29	9
Steps should be for guidance only/not statutory/imposed	21	7

Despite the fact that the majority agree with the proposed steps in principle, there are many suggestions as to how they can be improved.

Looking at responses of those who **do not explicitly say that they agree** with the proposed steps (i.e. excluding all those who said “yes, correct”), we can see that a quarter say that they are very resource-intensive and, without provision of adequate resources to help them follow these steps, respondents feel that adherence may be difficult. More flexibility, guidance and clarification regarding the steps is required by respondents. Also, some feel the complexities of developing SCS in all different local areas are not adequately reflected in the steps set out in the consultation document.

Key issues for those who <i>do not explicitly agree with the proposed steps in development of SCS at Q4</i>		
Base: 121 respondents who do not say “yes, correct” at Q4	<i>n</i>	%
Need local emphasis/must take local needs into account	46	38
Need more resources/will be resource intensive	30	25
Need to be more long-term/annual review period too short	20	17
Proposed steps not well defined/not distinct/needs clarification	19	16
Baselines differ/not the same for all areas/different priorities	17	14
Need flexibility/too rigid/not flexible	16	13
Steps should only be for guidance/not statutory/not imposed	14	12
Data analysis	13	11
Guidance/clarification (all mentions)	8	7
Cross-boundary/cross-linked targets are needed	5	4
Pressure to deliver to timescales	4	3
Need to share examples of good practice	4	3
Social economic and environmental issues need to be emphasised	4	3

When asked how the SCS could be better enabled to link social, economic and environmental goals, the largest number of respondents say that cross-boundary targets should be set. Just over one in five (22%) feel that a local emphasis is required, whereby locally-set targets and needs are taken into account. This reflects the spontaneous suggestions made at question 4. Again, there is a demand for more flexibility within the proposals to account for locally-specific circumstances. Respondents show some resistance here to top-down imposition of targets which is a recurring theme throughout this report.

Respondents also say that there is a need to consider the practical issues of capacity, resources and costs that are involved when embarking on cross-boundary working. Again, this reflects the general issues raised at question 4.

Views on using SCS to link social, economic and environmental goals at Q5	No. (Base = 293)	%
Cross boundary/cross linked targets	90	31
Need local emphasis/must take local needs into account	64	22
Need more resources/will be resource-intensive	32	11
Need to share examples of good practice	32	11
Need different priorities – baselines are not the same for all areas	28	10
Need flexibility/too rigid/not flexible	19	6
Steps should only be for guidance/not statutory/not imposed	17	6
Guidance/clarification needed	17	6

Example view: Wear Valley & Teesdale LSP

Wear Valley LSP and Teesdale LSP are already looking at joint working where a number of thematic groups and administrative support are shared to tackle joint issues and add value. Increased working together at locality level will ensure more robust Sustainable Community Strategies. However, Wear Valley LSP believe it is essential that inspection regimes are tasked with ensuring that the plans of agencies engaged with the LSP programmes are assessed on their ability to link with and support delivery of the SCS.

Example view: Chichester District Council

We would agree with most of what is set out in the consultation paper. However, for district LSPs the Community Strategy Action Plan and the LAA Action Plan are not necessarily the same thing. The LAA drives cooperation on significant, strategic issues at a county-wide level, but there are other local issues, which are important, but not part of the LAA.

Theme 5: Neighbourhood Engagement

Question 6 on consultation paper: *What should be the role of the LSP in supporting neighbourhood engagement and ensuring the neighbourhood/parish voice, including diverse and minority communities, is heard at the principal local level?*

Question 7 on consultation paper: *In two-tier areas, is it most appropriate for the responsibility for neighbourhood engagement to rest with the district-level LSP?*

Background in Consultation Document

LSPs have an important role in supporting neighbourhood engagement and ensuring that neighbourhoods can influence strategic local priorities.

It is essential that mechanisms and activities at neighbourhood level are linked effectively with decision-making and planning at the strategic local level. They also need to reflect national policies where relevant, such as those relating to planning or housing, so expectations need to be managed. Therefore, it is envisaged that the LSP will have an important facilitating role in supporting neighbourhood engagement, listening to the views of the neighbourhoods in a locality, and ensuring that neighbourhoods can influence wider priorities in service delivery and the allocation of resources. The LSP, in developing the Sustainable Community Strategy in partnership with local people, should set out the visions and plans for neighbourhood engagement in the locality.

In two-tier areas, the district level LSP may be best placed to ensure engagement of their local neighbourhoods, although there will also be merit in county authorities involving neighbourhoods and parishes in their LSP arrangements. In some areas, parish councils have also been closely involved in making links to specific neighbourhoods, often supported by the principal authority to develop parish plans. This can result in a more effective Local Strategic Partnership and may feed into the service delivery plans of LSP partners.

The main roles suggested for LSPs are:

- To consult local forums and partners in order to facilitate neighbourhood engagement. (Respondents from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) are particularly likely to hold this view (59%);
- An LSP's key focus needs to be on its local area and engaging more directly with its local communities.

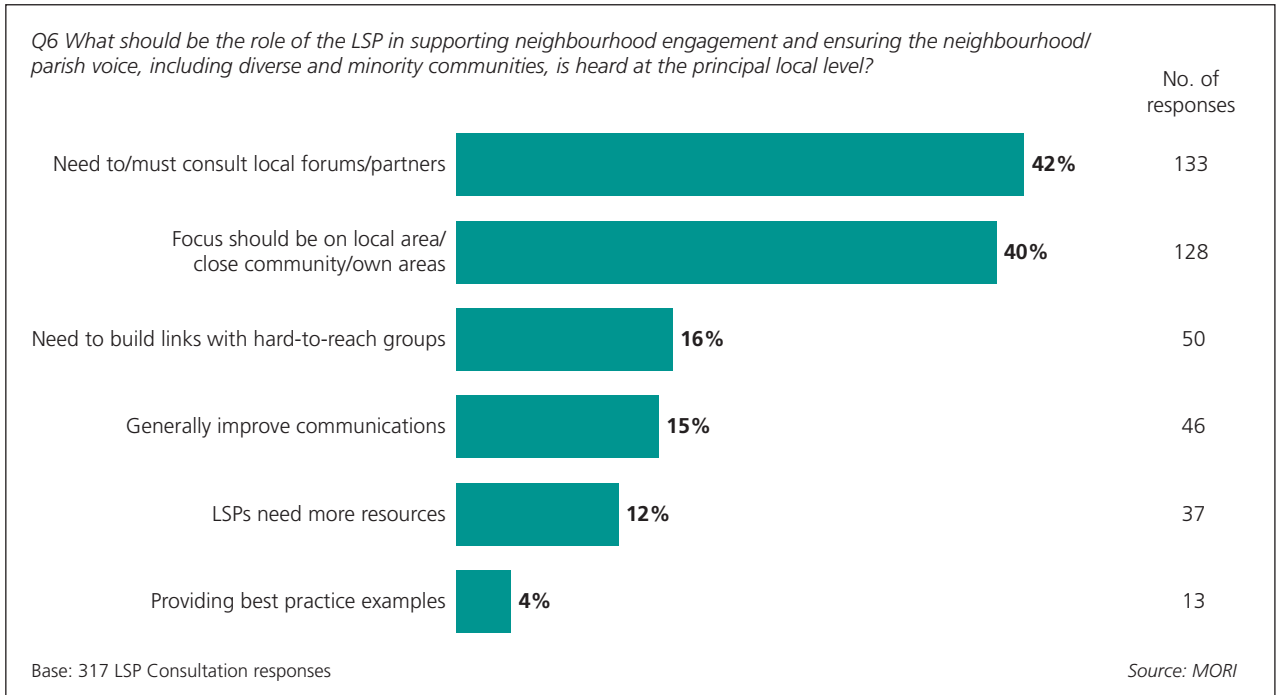
These both receive the support of around two-in-five respondents.

Important requirements for LSPs to be facilitators of neighbourhood engagement cited by respondents are:

- Improved communications;
- More resources; and;

- provision of best practice examples (to inform LSPs on how to go about encouraging neighbourhood engagement)

Theme 5: Neighbourhood Engagement – Question 6



Example view: Maidstone LSP

One project that has been successful in Maidstone has been the promotion of parish and neighbourhood plans. Research has then been commissioned from the rural community council to check consistency with community strategy priorities. The Community Planning Coordinator is the lead for both parish plans and the community strategy, which leads to joined-up plans.

The LSP is also mirrored at a neighbourhood level in disadvantaged estates by multi-agency partnership (MAP) groups that meet bi-monthly to join up approaches by the agencies to local issues. The Community Planning Coordinator is again involved here. The community planning team have now taken responsibility for the district and youth forums which is already proving useful. By having a team working at both neighbourhood engagement and strategic levels, they are best able to ensure community voices are heard at the principal local level

Examples of successful outputs:

Southampton City Council ensures that its five geographic neighbourhood partnerships currently have direct representation on the LSP. In addition, they ensure that the Community & Voluntary Sector Network (established as a requirement of a NRF LSP) does have a role in reaching the hard-to-reach groups and ensuring their voices are heard at the LSP.

The **'Leeds Initiative' LSP** has established five local district partnerships to assist in making sure that community engagement, including diverse and minority communities, provides a voice at the local level.

Elected city and parish councillors, and ward members, are involved in these structures. Leeds Initiative endeavours to make sure members are supported to fulfil their role effectively and are able to represent the voice of local people to a range of partners and service providers.

The **West Lancashire LSP** encourages the neighbourhood/parish voice of the community to be heard at the principal local level by the fact that the Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils (LAPTAC) holds three seats on the LSP Forum, and by inviting representatives to present parish plans to the LSP Forum. This is becoming a regular feature within meeting agendas and is instrumental in outlining the work carried out, often alongside the community and voluntary sector, in involving the local community to put together the Plan. Parish plans feed into the Local Plan and the SCS as much as possible, and by presenting the plans to the LSP Forum, this assists in attracting funding and implementation. Several parishes within West Lancashire are also working jointly with adjoining parishes on issues such as health, youth, policing and transport, which will enable further recognition within the principal local level.

As we can see from the table below, over half of respondents answering this question agree that the responsibility for neighbourhood engagement should rest with the district-level LSP. A further four-in-ten hold the view that if the proposal for district level LSPs to have responsibility for neighbourhood engagement is to work, a more local area/community driven approach is required. Specifically, 18% say county LSPs should be sensitive to district LSPs: 14% want to see more focus on local areas and 12% say consultation with local forums and partners is needed.

Views on district-level LSP having responsibility for neighbourhood engagement at Q7	No. (Base = 277)	%
Yes, in favour	154	56
Yes but County LSPs should be sensitive to district LSPs' priorities	49	18
Effective neighbourhood engagement needs more focus on local area/close community	39	14
Effective neighbourhood engagement needs to consult local forums/partners	34	12
One size does not fit all/need other options	15	5
Clarification of roles/responsibilities required for proposal to work	13	5
LSPs in general need more resources to perform neighbourhood engagement role more effectively	12	4

LSPs can usefully play two roles to support neighbourhood engagement. Firstly, at the district-wide level, LSPs should be helping to coordinate and rationalise neighbourhood arrangements across different agencies to avoid duplication and ensure that resources are used efficiently. Their second role could be to ensure that different agencies, such as police, health and education, work together in neighbourhood forums with local councillors.

The Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)

Perhaps not surprisingly, a far higher proportion (80%) of district council respondents agree with this in comparison with those from county councils (25%). Respondents from county councils are more likely to hold the view that they just need to have more regard to district LSPs, rather than district LSPs having sole responsibility for neighbourhood engagement.

A succinct encapsulation of the county council view is provided by the County Councils Network:

The CCN does not believe that the LSP has a significant role in neighbourhood engagement: this is primarily the role of local authorities which have the electoral legitimacy to engage with communities and to resolve competing public interests. In two-tier areas county councils operate effectively at the strategic level, and also ensure delivery of a wide range of services at a very local level, including direct to individuals in their own homes. The CCN therefore does not believe that the responsibility for neighbourhood engagement should rest with the district-level LSP.

County Councils Network

As we also see in most areas of the consultation, respondents say they need clarification of roles and responsibilities, best-practice examples and guidance and generally improved communications in order to fully back the proposals.

There is a demand for LSPs to take a key role in supporting neighbourhood engagement, but many respondents point to the practical implications of this.

It must be accepted that 'neighbourhood', like 'community' will always be something of an artificial construct. Counties need to engage with their public on many issues, as well as districts. Under current two-tier arrangements, the nature of the issue (or the service) will be as important as which tier, in determining where responsibility for neighbourhood engagement will lie. This should be determined locally.

Local Government Association

Theme 6: Links with the Local Development Framework

Question 8 on consultation paper: *How can spatial planning teams best contribute to Sustainable Community Strategies through the LSP and ensure that LDFs and Sustainable Community Strategies are closely linked?*

Question 9 on consultation paper: *How could revised guidance and accompanying support materials best ensure that Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks join up effectively?*

Background in Consultation Document

The Local Development Framework must be a key component in the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, setting out its spatial aspects and providing a long-term spatial vision. LDFs go beyond traditional land use planning and should integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes that influence areas and how they function, including those for supporting infrastructure and service delivery. In practice, this linkage is often not very apparent.

This may not be surprising given the relative newness of LDFs. However, it is important that we establish more firmly the nature of the relationship and how links might be achieved in practice. This is particularly important given that this constitutes a new role for LSPs and requires a new way of working for both the partnership and planners.

The different stages of the Local Development Framework process have many linkages with the production of Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements. These include: surveying and gathering evidence; involving the local community and other stakeholders in working up proposals and appraising alternative options; writing core strategies and thematic and area action plans. The expertise in the fields of analysis, assessment and geographic information systems in many plan-making teams can provide a valuable support to the production of more evidence-based Sustainable Community Strategies. The close links to a variety of service providers and the community, which LSPs deliver, can in turn assist plans to be more firmly integrated within and owned by the community and key stakeholders.

If spatial planning teams are to contribute to their Sustainable Community Strategy, the most important requirement cited by respondents is to ensure closer working and better communications between planning teams and the LSP rather than structural or policy changes at the centre. A key sub-group difference is that respondents from county councils (75%) are more likely to express the need for joined-up working than are their counterparts from district councils (54%).

Where possible, the development of Sustainable Community Strategies and LDFs should be built upon shared consultation processes informed by both spatial and community planning teams. This should ensure that they reflect the same priorities and can then achieve some synergy in achieving their objectives. Their primary purpose is to support, in a spatial sense, the delivery of community cohesion aspirations. To allow for this, the relevant government departments will need to be working to similar time-lines, which is often not the case. It is an interactive process where one plan must be revised to inform the other through time

Shaw PCT

Views on contribution of spatial planning teams to SCS through LSP at Q8	No. (Base = 275)	%
Requires closer working/better communication between teams	128	47
Requires close links between SCS and LDF	74	27
Requires joined-up policies/frameworks	55	20
Requires best practice guidance/advice	44	17
Requires integrated working arrangements	16	6
Need formal arrangements to encourage consultation between different contributors to the SCS	14	5
Requires training	9	3
No need, already doing this	9	3
Requires resources	5	2
Requires shared long-term vision	5	2

Worcestershire LSP cite several ways of strengthening the links between the LDF and Sustainable Community Strategy:

- *Using the LSP as a key consultee in the development of the LD;*
- *Regular communication between officers responsible for community planning, LSPs and LDFs and possibly having a planning officer on the LSP – in their own right or in an advisory capacity;*
- *Basing the Core Strategy of the LDF around the Community Strategy themes and priorities;*
- *Using shared evidence/consultation bases to develop the Community Strategy and LDF;*
- *LSPs and local authorities adopting parish plans as ‘local information sources’;*
- *Use of a common set of local quality of life indicators to monitor the LDF and Community Strategy;*
- *Secondment of relevant planning staff to the LSP to aid integration.*

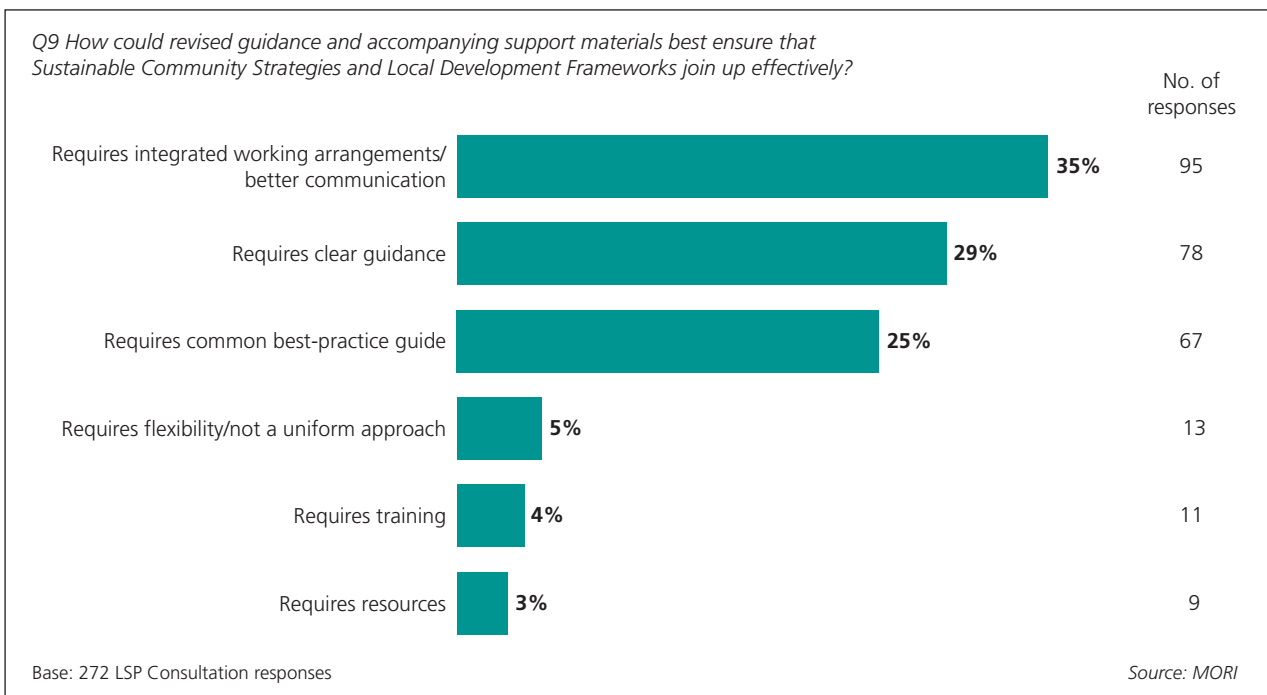
Liss Parish Council's view:

Liss Parish Council feels, in accordance with Government guidance, that the role of the LDF should be to deliver the spatial plan for the community strategy, but Government advice currently lacks clear guidance on expected/best practice for linking parish planning into LDFs and community strategies. LPC says that parishes require greater clarity and support to ensure that parish plans can be effectively translated into action through the community strategy and, where appropriate, the LDF. Many parishes will require assistance to undertake onerous sustainability appraisals and LDFs should contain a "policy hook" on which to hang the inclusion of parish plan outcomes.

As we can see from the chart below, key facilitators for ensuring effective revised guidance and accompanying support materials to link the SCS with LDF can be grouped around two main themes:

- **Improved working relationships:** as stated above, the largest number of respondents say more integrated working and better communications are the most important factor to consider.
- **Approach and content:** the most commonly cited requirements for the approach and content of the guidance are: clear best-practice guidance to be produced and for a common best-practice guide to be circulated in order to avoid overlapping guides from too many sources.
- Other requirements include the need to allow *flexibility* to account for local situations and that *guidance should not be too prescriptive*. More *training and support* in the form of resources are required, plus a small number subscribe to the suggestion that formal arrangements are needed to encourage consultation.

Theme 6: Links with Local Development Framework – Question 9



West Lancashire LSPs view:

West Lancashire District Council has seconded the Planning Policy Manager onto its Corporate Policy Unit in order to more closely align the review of our Community Strategy with the preparation of the core strategy. One area of concern that they are grappling with is that there are more stages involved in preparing a core strategy LDF document than there are for a Community Strategy. Therefore, it may be difficult to align consultation at every stage. They require some guidance on how a joint statement of community involvement should be prepared and what it should contain.

Theme 7: Two-tier Areas

Question 10 on consultation paper: *Should every local authority area have its own LSP?*

Question 11 on consultation paper: *Would the establishment of a greater delineation of roles between county and district LSPs as suggested be sensible?*

Background in Consultation Document

Establishing clear roles and responsibilities in two-tier local authority areas can be problematic. Two-tier LSPs have expressed mixed views as to whether or not working across two-tier areas poses a significant problem. 50% state that the LSP represents a forum where county/district tensions are avoided but 42% disagree. Similarly, 52% feel that there is effective collaboration between county and district LSPs but 40% disagree. Our LSP evaluation programme has identified three main ways of working:

1. **Aggregation model** – where district-level Community Strategies are aggregated to form an overarching strategy, at county level
2. **Added Value model** – county Community Strategies focus on areas where it can add value to district strategies – creating more strategic focus, avoiding duplication and with an emphasis on sub-regional issues
3. **Separatist model** – where the county strategy has been developed with few linkages and in isolation from district strategies

While retaining scope for local discretion, there may be value in being clearer about the roles of different LSPs across a county. We would want to encourage more areas to move to a combination of the 'added value' and 'aggregation' models.

A possible model in two-tier areas could therefore be to develop a strategic Sustainable Community Strategy at county level, with a remit to engage with the regional, sub-regional tiers and district authorities/LSPs to reflect their priorities. District-level LSPs could then focus on local/neighbourhood engagement and establishing an analysis of the needs of their population. Evidence suggests that in several places this model has evolved naturally. This model is based upon a presumption that each local authority should have its own LSP which can determine the specific priorities for that area.

Reaction to the question of whether or not all authority areas should have their own LSP is largely mixed. Just over two-in-five are in agreement and only 8% of respondents express outright disagreement. However, the largest proportion of respondents answer 'it depends', citing different local circumstances as the reason for them being unable to answer a simple 'yes' or 'no' and they say that the decision whether or not to have an LSP should be based on what works for that local area and is largely dependent on local circumstances.

Views on whether every local authority area should have its own LSP at Q10	No. (Base = 246)	%
Dependent on local circumstances/not all LSPs are defined by LA boundaries	112	46
Yes	108	44
Accountable to communities not Govt/not to prescription/order	24	10
Need clarification of roles	22	9
No	20	8

Some interesting sub-group differences also emerge from the results. More respondents from district councils (58%) say all LA areas should have an LSP compared to 25% of county council respondents. The same is the case for county and district level LSPs (52% vs. 17% respectively).

Looking specifically at the 112 respondents who say “it depends”, there is again a resistance to this being a mandatory directive – respondents would rather see each LA area decide themselves whether or not an LSP would be useful to them, rather than have one imposed by a Government directive.

These concerns are reflected in some additional caveats: specifically that there are not currently sufficient resources to support having LSPs in all areas and that county-level LSPs are more economically efficient. Others say that they prefer the current flexible arrangements.

Base: 112 respondents saying “Based on what works for local area/local geography/dependent on local circumstances” at Q10	<i>n</i>	%
Yes, every local authority should have its own LSP	34	31
LSPs should be accountable to communities not Govt/not to prescription/order	14	13
County LSPs are too remote/should be district only	10	9
Clarification of roles/responsibility required in order to reduce duplication of work	10	9
No, every local authority should not have its own LSP	6	5
County level LSP makes more economic sense	3	2
More resources are needed to make the proposal work	2	2
Would lose knowledge/experience if LSP structure is changed	1	1

Example view: North Yorkshire County Council

In North Yorkshire, they see analysis of local needs being carried out collaboratively by the relevant agencies working across their areas in total. Analysis of health, accessibility, regeneration, crime and disorder, education and social care and other needs can be done for a whole county more economically than district-by-district. North Yorkshire County Council say the role of the county LSP might better be described as identifying the vision for the future development of the county, recognising the diversity of interest within it. The role of the district LSPs would then be to ensure that there are multi-agency programmes in place locally to deliver outcomes.

Case study: Kent County Council

The review of the Vision for Kent (the county-wide community strategy) has strengthened working relations between the two tiers in Kent and an 'added value' model has been developed which has been well-received. However, the process has identified some areas for improvement (KCC representation at LSP meetings and links between local boards and LSPs for example). They are working to address these issues as well as ensure greater transparency, engagement and joint collaboration as outlined in the paper.

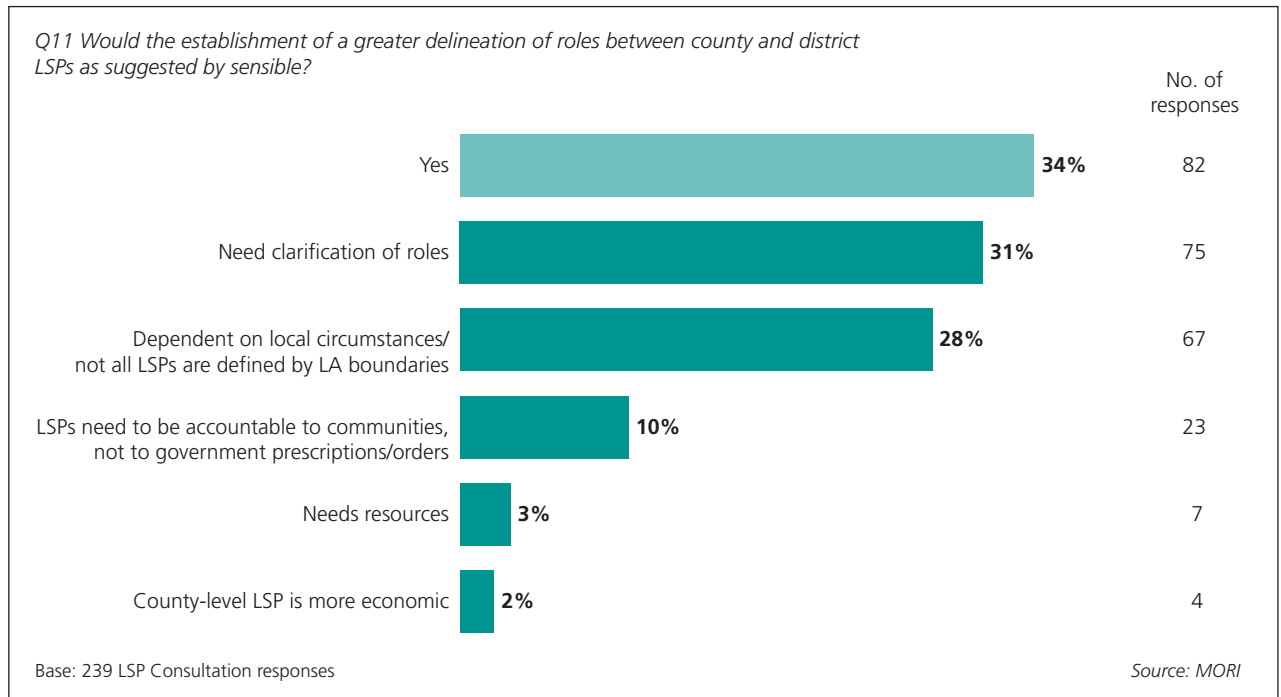
When asked whether the establishment of a greater delineation of roles between county and district LSPs would be sensible, over one in three say that it would, and this does not differ across sub-groups. A further three-in-ten, however, add a caveat and say that this would require more clarity and delineation of roles, in order to reduce confusion and duplication of efforts. This positive reaction reflects previous calls in the consultation responses to other questions for more clear definition of roles in the different LSPs.

However, an equally large proportion of respondents (28%) are cautious and say that such decisions need to be based on what works for that particular area and are dependent on local circumstances.

The Learning and Skills Council view:

The LSC suggest that the way in which existing partnerships have managed the interface and interaction between two levels should be built upon rather than starting afresh.

Theme 7: Two-tier areas – Question 11



Looking specifically at those who say that the feasibility of a greater delineation of roles is dependent on local circumstances, the results show that, a significant proportion of these respondents are concerned over the need for local communities to be more empowered rather than taking directives or prescriptions from the Government.

Base: 67 respondents saying "Based on what works for local area/ local geography/dependent on local circumstances" at Q11	n	%
Clarification of role/responsibility required/reduce duplication	19	29
Accountable to communities not Govt/not to prescription/order	9	14
County too remote/should be district only	4	6
County level LSP makes more economic sense	2	3
Would lose knowledge/experience	1	1

Theme 8: LSP as the Partnership of Partnerships

Question 12 on consultation paper: *We believe that it is important that the LSP is made up of the thematic partnerships in the area together with an LSP board. What is your view?*

Question 13 on consultation paper: *We believe that a rationalisation of local partnerships would help the LSP executive take an effective overview. Would clustering partnerships around the four LAA blocks be a sensible way to achieve this?*

Question 14 on consultation paper: *We believe that the geographic boundary of partners within LSPs is important. What do you see as the opportunities for and barriers to coterminosity shared geographic boundaries?*

Question 15 on consultation paper: *Within the LSP framework and its established priorities, would the creation of single delivery vehicles to tackle particular issues be helpful?*

Background in Consultation Document

The key feature of LSPs is that they should be the overarching partnership in a locality bringing together all local thematic partnerships. For this system of partnerships to operate as an effective coordinator of delivery, each LSP needs effective, accepted and transparent governance arrangements.

There is no one model for the governance of an LSP. They reflect the variety of local circumstances, and often derive from what was there before. The local authority's involvement is vital to the effective operation of an LSP, the local authority is also responsible for producing the Sustainable Community Strategy and is accountable for the LSP's actions and is also the accountable body for the LAA. The local authority's democratic mandate and accountability provides a clear basis on which to determine priorities across the local area. Therefore, we see a clear role for the local authority in initiating and maintaining momentum in the LSP, ensuring appropriate representation across the different sectors including involving local residents; and scrutinising the LSP.

LSP structures should not be specified in detail at national level. However, experience has shown that the basic structure of an LSP should include some form of executive board, underpinned by the local thematic partnerships and which will effectively be the delivery mechanisms for the LSP.

Another approach to developing effective governance arrangements may be to introduce single delivery vehicles/service delivery partnerships which could focus on the delivery of specific issues under the umbrella of the LSP. While LSPs can join up strategy and commissioning they are not direct delivery bodies. If such an approach were to be adopted we would expect the LSP to oversee the activities of the single delivery vehicle to ensure they fit with the priorities identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA.

A majority agrees with the proposed LSP structure of thematic partnerships in the area together with an LSP board, and this level of agreement remains consistent across all sub-groups. The strongest voice of disagreement comes from the 18% who say that different LSPs have different issues and a certain amount of flexibility is needed. A further 14% say that decisions about LSP structure need to be driven by and reflect local circumstances.

One-in-seven (13%) say they already have such LSP structures in place. Furthermore, 7% say that such LSP structures help to build and strengthen existing partnerships and encourage joint working. Similarly, 4% say that this proposed LSP structure helps them to develop a focused agenda and a strong strategic direction.

Views on proposed LSP structure at Q12	No. (Base = 314)	%
Yes agree to proposed LSP structure	178	69
A range of issues were raised:		
One size does not fit all/flexibility required/different LSPs have different issues	58	18
To be driven by/reflect local circumstances	45	14
Yes, Already have thematic partnerships	41	13
Need to make provision for cross-cutting themes	33	11
Need to build and strengthen existing partnership/encourage joint working	21	7
Rationalising partnerships helps focus/strategic direction	12	4
Proposed LSP structure needs clarification	11	4

A typical example of the majority of responses is provided by Three Rivers LSP. They support the proposed LSP structure, but they add some caveats as to how it should be best implemented:

We think that forming thematic partnerships makes sense. However, we think there is a need to ensure that issues not covered by one of the themes do not fall through the gaps. There are also resource and governance implications when thematic partnerships are established at county level in response to their lead on LAA. In such circumstances the strategic view of a county partnership may not always take into consideration local differences and may not direct resources to local priorities of individual district LSPs. Supporting themed partnerships at a local level needs resources to support them.

Three Rivers LSP

However, the proposed structure is not met with unequivocal agreement. The table below shows the key concerns and caveats that need to be brought to light before the proposed structure is implemented as cited by respondents who **do not explicitly agree** with the proposed LSP structure.

Key issues for those who do not explicitly agree with the proposed LSP structure at Q12 Base: 136 respondents who do not say "yes, agree" at Q12	<i>n</i>	%
Structure needs to be driven by/reflect local circumstances	28	20
Already have thematic partnerships	28	20
One size does not fit all/previous experience shows flexibility is required	27	20
Need to make provision for (crosscutting themes health/police/environment etc.)	22	16
Build and strengthen existing partnerships/joint working	13	9
Different LSPs have different issues	10	7
Clarification of proposed role is needed	8	6

Critics of the suggested governance for LSPs are resistant to centrally-imposed models, for example:

As such, we do not support the proposal for LSPs to be defined as 'partnership of partnerships', with a rigid, centrally-defined model based around thematic partnerships and an executive. This is not the primary function of an LSP. To be able to develop a realistic community strategy and facilitate the delivery of this, LSPs have an important role to play in bringing key public, private and voluntary or community organisations together to take ownership of the strategy. As such, LSPs are also a strategic partnership of the 'key-players' in any locality and provide an opportunity for these key players to look beyond immediate service priorities and identify long-term aspirations.

The Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)

Reliance on a very wide range of stakeholders coming round the table, with their roles, responsibilities and individual accountabilities essentially unchanged, is insufficient. For too many partners in a locality, the LSP would remain, as at present, 'not part of the day job' or 'just a set of meetings'. Partnerships are not a panacea. Their inherent strengths of flexibility, cross-cutting remits, and joint endeavour are mirrored by inherent weaknesses of instability and flux, lack of clear leadership, and diffuse accountability. As a long-term solution for joined-up public service delivery, and particularly as a vehicle for governing localities, partnerships have limitations.

Local Government Association

Some agree with the suggested role; however whilst questioning the abilities of LSPs to fulfil it.

To succeed, LSPs will need to be fit-for-purpose and become an effective executive board of decision makers. Evidence suggests that they are not yet at this stage of their development. Given the amount of time it has taken for partnerships to move from being 'talking shops' to achieving measurable outcomes, there is a risk that LSPs may not be able to deliver all that is expected without clear guidance and support from the Government.

The Audit Commission

We support the rationalisation of partnerships. However, there is some fear that the original vision of the LSP as a ‘partnership of partnerships’ – terminology which remains in this document – means a partnership is required in order to champion an issue of service. Without such a partnership, will such an issue/service be significant enough to feature within the LSP’s vision, and if so, how? The basic structure in figure 4 suggests ‘other’ partnerships could also report to the LSP executive, How are cross-cutting services without a partnership to do this? This structure in effect promotes the consultation, or even initiation of partnerships, in order to get a seat at the table, which is clearly alone not desirable.

Legal Services Commission

In considering a governance model for LSPs, the Service believes that the current Local Area Agreement model, incorporating the various blocks, provides a useful starting point for determining governance arrangements. However, it should be acknowledged that a number of cross-cutting issues exist, e.g. misuse of alcohol, which would need to be adequately accommodated in those arrangements.

Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service

Respondents are ambivalent over the issue of rationalising local partnerships in the form of clustering partnerships around the 4 LAA blocks, with around a quarter both agreeing and disagreeing. Again, a significant number of respondents (36%) adopt a more cautious view that one solution doesn’t necessarily apply to all LSPs and some flexibility is required to account for this. Other key caveats to the proposed rationalisation are that themes that cut across two or more of the 4-blocks need to be accounted for, plus, there may even be gaps in the 4-blocks classification system whereby (if an area doesn’t fit into them) it may get overlooked.

Views on rationalization of local partnerships at Q13	No. (Base = 309)	%
One size does not fit all/previous experience shows flexibility required	112	36
Yes agree to clustering around 4 blocks	81	26
No disagree to clustering around 4 blocks	69	22
Need to be driven by/reflect local circumstances	68	22
Need to make provision for crosscutting themes	62	20
There will be gaps between the blocks/omit important areas	33	11

Three-in-ten of district council respondents (30%) disagree to the 4-block rationalisation, compared to just over one-in-ten of county council respondents (13%).

Many respondents feel that the 4 LAA blocks are too rigid and there is a general feeling that the 4 blocks do not account for cross-cutting themes.

The danger is that cross-cutting issues, particularly sustainable development and sustainable communities, are often of secondary importance in relation to the four blocks. The SDC recommends that sustainable development is fully incorporated into each LAA block. Guidance should clearly explain how sustainable development can be addressed within each block and how it can be delivered as a cross-cutting issue. For example, LSPs might want to consider: employing a 'sustainability coordinator' (Birmingham LSP currently has one for example), and/or ensuring that there is a sustainable development champion on the executive board.

Sustainable Development Commission

Case study: The Environment Agency

The EA expresses concern that clustering LSP sub-partnerships around the four LAA blocks will restrict coverage of environmental issues, and consequently, sustainable development. Moreover, they feel that the Local Area Agreement (LAA) structure, which is used as the mechanism to secure funding to support LSPs and Community Strategies, has generally failed to address environment issues.

A solution they suggest is the idea of environment as a 5th block under the heading "other local partnerships", e.g. "environment" or "culture". As they feel that the environment is central to both the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy and Sustainable Community Strategies, it therefore should be given equal standing to the four main priorities in LSPs.

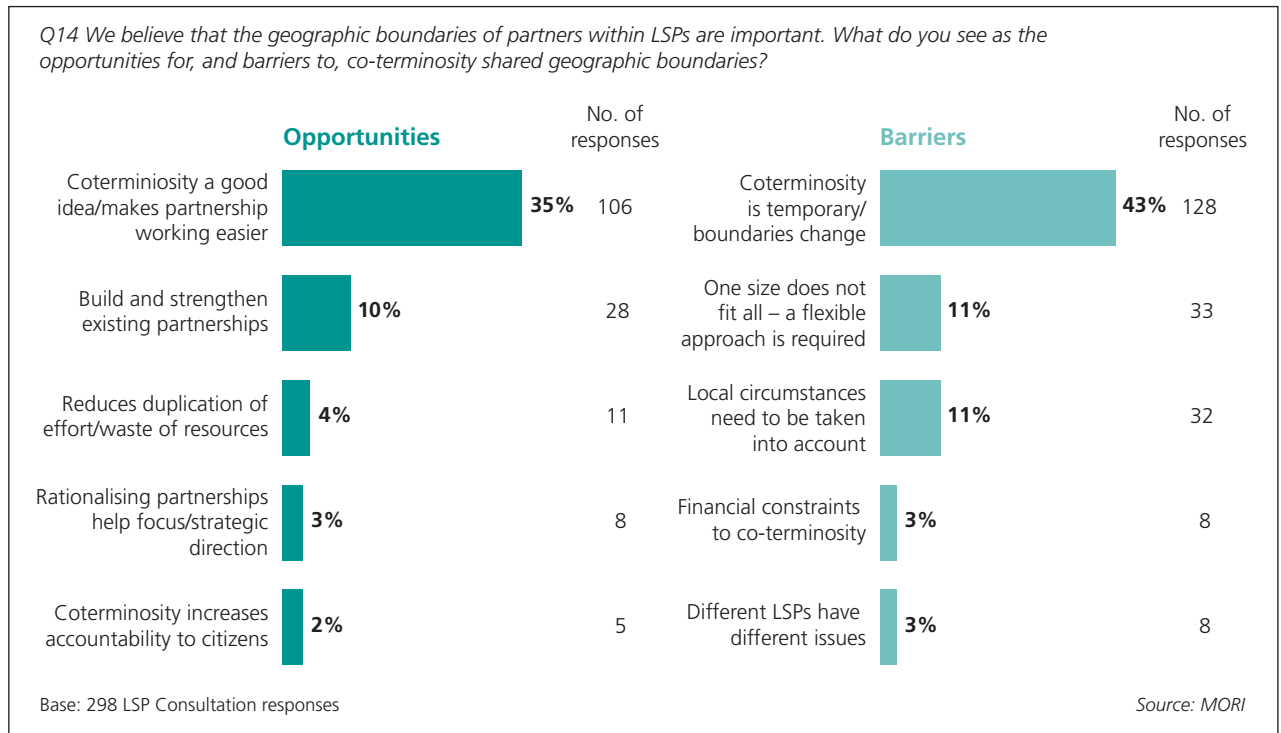
According to the EA's response, there are already some examples of where the environment has been adopted as a 5th block. For example, the Worcestershire LAA has adopted this model. The block is subdivided into: cleaner, greener, safer public spaces; tackling and adapting to climate change; waste and recycling; and protect and improve Worcestershire's environment.

Case study: South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance

"Rationalisation is an attractive idea but it is simplistic to think that existing partnerships can easily be disbanded and replaced with new ones. Partnership working is all about building relationships and there are many politics (with a small 'p') involved in the rationalisation process. Where possible, it is important to use/merge existing partnerships – but this takes time. In South Wiltshire, we rationalised our CDRP by merging its board with the LSP board. This change took over a year to implement. Existing partnerships will not accept a hierarchical relationship with the LSP, given that many of them pre-date the LSP. In South Wiltshire we have developed a partnership agreement between our LSP and South Wiltshire Action Against Poverty, which has been helpful. We intend to roll it out with other partnerships.

The chart below shows the key opportunities and the key barriers to coterminosity in the eyes of respondents to this consultation. Respondents are more inclined to mention barriers rather than opportunities. Among the barriers mentioned, the strongest is the fact that coterminosity is only temporary due to the fact that boundaries often change. Other key concerns echo those stated throughout the consultation in that provision needs to be made for specific local circumstances and one model that works for most LSPs will not work for all.

Theme 8: LSP as the partnership of partnerships – Question 14



The common view among respondents, that fluctuating boundaries are a barrier to effective partnership working, is well summarised by the quote below:

Coterminosity is a major key to successful partnership working, but uncertainty caused by frequent restructuring and a lack of coherent approach between Government departments in re-organisation of boundaries (police, PCT etc.) can act as a major barrier. It may be inevitable that in some areas partners continue to work with differing boundaries due to local circumstances. In these cases it is important that duplication is avoided and that the LSP is flexible enough to accommodate partners with different boundaries.

Local Government Association

Coterminosity significantly simplifies partnership working: however, recognition of what constitutes an area remains a problem, particularly in rural areas. The rural borders of two counties may have more in common with each other than with the towns either side. Similar issues apply in larger cities and closely neighbouring urban areas.

The Audit Commission

Example of a positive view: Bradford Council

Bradford District is the fourth largest metropolitan district by area. The geographical, demographic and institutional nature of the district means that formal and informal 'boundaries' exist and matter. The Council and its partners are active in working with the public to ensure that delivery and working arrangements transcend any such inefficiencies and problems arising.

Public sector reorganisation with greater alignment to shared boundaries is underway. Across the main public service commissioners and providers, ongoing dialogue is in place to actively plan and manage shared priorities and matters of mutual concern. Indeed, a newly formed community strategy delivery group will provide an arena for the key decision-makers from these agencies to meet and shape the delivery of the community strategy and related plans.

Example of an equivocal view: West Lancashire LSP

They agree that the geographic boundaries of partners within LSPs are as important as coterminous shared geographic boundaries. West Lancashire LSP feels that greater coterminosity could enable LSPs to be administered in an easier way, but the fact that neighbourhoods do not always sit clearly into geographical boundaries poses a potential barrier. For example, the definition of a neighbourhood could alter when considering health needs rather than housing.

Just under half feel that the creation of single delivery vehicles (SDVs) to tackle particular issues would be helpful. This level of agreement remains consistent across all sub-groups.

Views on creation of SDVs at Q15	No. (Base = 289)	%
Yes agree single delivery vehicles will be helpful	138	48
To be driven by local circumstances/Different LSPs have different issues	45	16
One size does not fit all/previous experience shows flexibility required	38	13
No disagree single delivery vehicles will be helpful	37	13
Single delivery could be expensive/need resources	14	5
Single delivery would increase bureaucracy	14	5

There should be single delivery vehicles if they are in the best interest of the consumer. They must encourage agencies to work together to tackle particular issues better and reduce unnecessary duplication of services. It is also important that they do not mitigate against the involvement of the voluntary sector or localised delivery agents as these agencies may be more approachable and understand the needs of local areas better.

The Prince's Trust

Despite some level of agreement, respondents do point to several problems with the SDVs approach. Looking at these in terms of those who **do not explicitly agree** provides some insight as to what these concerns are: a quarter of this group disagree outright and 5% say that an LSP is not a delivery vehicle at all. A sixth of this group (17%) say whether or not SDVs are useful depends on local circumstances and flexibility is required when applying this approach. The introduction of SDVs is seen as resource-intensive by 6% of respondents and as bureaucratic by the same number.

Key issues for those who <i>do not</i> explicitly agree with the proposed SDV approach at Q15 Base: 155 respondents who do not say "yes, agree" at Q15	<i>n</i>	%
No, disagree single delivery vehicles will not be helpful	37	24
One size does not fit all/previous experience shows flexibility is required	26	17
Need to be driven by/reflect local circumstances	22	14
Need to make provision for (crosscutting themes health/police/environment etc.	11	7
Single delivery could be expensive/need resources	10	6
Single delivery would increase bureaucracy	10	6
Different LSPs have different issues	9	6
LSP is not a delivery vehicle	8	5

An example of the aversion to the idea of LSPs as SDVs is given below

Emphasis for delivery is more properly placed on the local partners in any LSP. This will be vitally important in ensuring that local agencies 'take ownership' of the community strategy and take real responsibility for making it happen. The approach currently set out in the consultation paper is likely to cause confusion for local authorities without greater clarification on this relationship between LSPs and the delivery of local objectives and services.

The Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)

Theme 9: Ensuring Wide Representation

Question 16 on consultation paper: *How can the neighbourhood and parish tiers be involved most effectively on the LSP on a) the executive and b) individual thematic partnerships?*

Question 17 on consultation paper: *How can the private, voluntary and community sectors be involved most effectively on the LSP as a) the executive and b) individual thematic partnerships?*

Background in Consultation Document

LSPs are well placed to encourage wider **community involvement** in developing a vision for the area's future as well as **community action** which helps deliver a genuinely sustainable community. However, to make this a reality it is important that representatives from the voluntary and community sector are included on LSPs and relevant sub-groups, both in their roles as service deliverers and as representatives of the local community. Representatives need to reflect all the community including a diverse range of minority voluntary and community sector interests. Their representation on both the board and its sub-thematic partnerships will be critical to ensuring LSPs can tackle the increasingly important challenges of achieving community cohesion and tackling social exclusion.

The original Community Strategy and LSP guidance anticipated that the **private sector** would also be fully involved in the community planning process and the scrutiny of it. To date, the evidence suggests that this has been patchy. There are a number of reasons for this, such as the perceived limited role and effectiveness of many LSPs, particularly those without additional funding. However, economic development should be recognised as a key part of the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA and therefore it is critical that individual local businesses together with their umbrella organisations are represented on both the board and its sub-thematic partnerships.

Significant proportions of respondents feel that neighbourhood and parish tiers should have direct involvement on the LSP. A quarter of respondents (25%) explicitly stated that neighbourhood and parish tiers should be engaged with thematic partnerships and one-in-eight (12%) believe they should be represented at executive level.

However, there are others who feel that stakeholders do not need to be *directly* involved in either the executive or the thematic partnerships in order to influence decision-making. Instead, they feel it is more appropriate if they feed in to 'umbrella' organisations who are directly involved, as they represent a larger number of groups. For instance, a quarter (25%) felt they should be represented through community networks or neighbourhood partnerships. Other ways of indirect involvement mentioned were involvement through nominated representatives from each sector and via regular consultation (21% and 20% respectively).

"Meaningful direct involvement isn't practical – boards would become too big."

Kirklees LSP

In addition, 3% of respondents explicitly stated that the board needs to be compact and should not be too large, and one in six (17%) feel that the composition of the LSP should be tailored to local circumstances and a 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not work. The quote below sums up both these sentiments.

"Raising expectations that a) being round a 'top table' is the only route to influence and b) everyone can be round that 'top table' is unrealistic and unhelpful. There is no one-size-fits-all solution and prescriptive approaches from the centre will not help to achieve representation at the local level."

Local Government Association

A number of responses cited actions that could be undertaken to make involvement more effective and these include:

- Clear communication (as explicitly mentioned by 14%);
- Pooled funding/resources (7%);
- Clear roles/responsibilities (3%); and
- Clear aims/objectives for involvement (2%).

Lastly, one-in-nine (11%) respondents explicitly stated that they already have wide representation on their LSP and that the current measures they have in place are effective. One example of how this is achieved is having a representative from the National Association of Local Councils on the LSP board.

Example view: Carrick Communities LSP

Carrick Communities LSP includes the Chair of Carrick Community Alliance (a partnership whose membership is open to any organisation or community group in Carrick). Therefore, the Chair can reflect the views of the Alliance on the LSP.

It also has champions for particular issues supported by 'task and finish groups' and consultative forums as required. Neighbourhoods and parishes can participate in these when they touch their area of interest.

Turning to the opinions of the neighbourhood and parish tiers, only one parish council responded to this question. It feels they should be engaged through both thematic partnerships and on the executive. It also mentions clear communication, clear roles/responsibilities and clear aims/objectives as things that will help make their involvement more effective.

Involvement of private, voluntary and community sectors

There needs to be a recognition of the vital role that businesses play and why they should be involved in LSPs. Engagement should not simply be seen as a corporate social responsibility obligation on businesses, but an opportunity for genuine engagement in addressing the challenges faced in a local area that will bring mutual benefit, for example by improving the business environment as well as creating jobs and getting people into work. Businesses have real expertise of delivery to bring to LSPs. In some instances, LSPs are chaired by a private sector representative or have a number of them on their board/executive. This has been well received by the business community and is reflected in more positive views of LSPs' potential.

British Chambers of Commerce

The government should allow each LSP to develop its own way of involving neighbourhood groups, e.g. through neighbourhood/area governance structures. Community networks should be the means of selecting representatives from the community/voluntary sector to sit on the LSP Executive. The government and CBI/chambers of commerce should be encouraged to emphasise the role business can play in ensuring that Sustainable Community Strategies are based on a realistic assessment of economic possibilities. Partnerships should recognise that the private sector has expertise which will be particularly useful for economic development, skills or worklessness themed partnerships.

North Tyneside Strategic Partnership

Respondents' views of how the private and voluntary and community sectors (VCS) can be most effectively involved are fairly similar to their perceptions of the neighbourhood and parish tiers. One-third of respondents explicitly state that they feel the LSP should include representatives from the community/voluntary and private sector (33% and 32% respectively). One in six (17%) feel this should be through engagement with thematic partnerships and one in seven (14%) say through representation on the executive.

Again, there are some respondents who feel the private sector and the VCS should be involved indirectly via other representatives (e.g. nominated representatives from each sector (18%) or community networks (13%)).

Like the neighbourhood and parish tiers one-in-seven (14%) feel the composition should be left up to individual areas to decide and 4% feel those involved should depend on the issue or topic under discussion.

A small number of responses (4%) indicated that in order to attract the private sector the LSP needs to demonstrate the benefits of partnership working to local businesses and how they can add value. Some reasons given for the full potential of the private sector not being realised are:

- Lack of clarity about its role and potential contribution;
- Lack of understanding about how it can add value to the LSP;
- Lack of understanding about community planning, LSP structures and processes;
- Little incentive to invest time and resources.

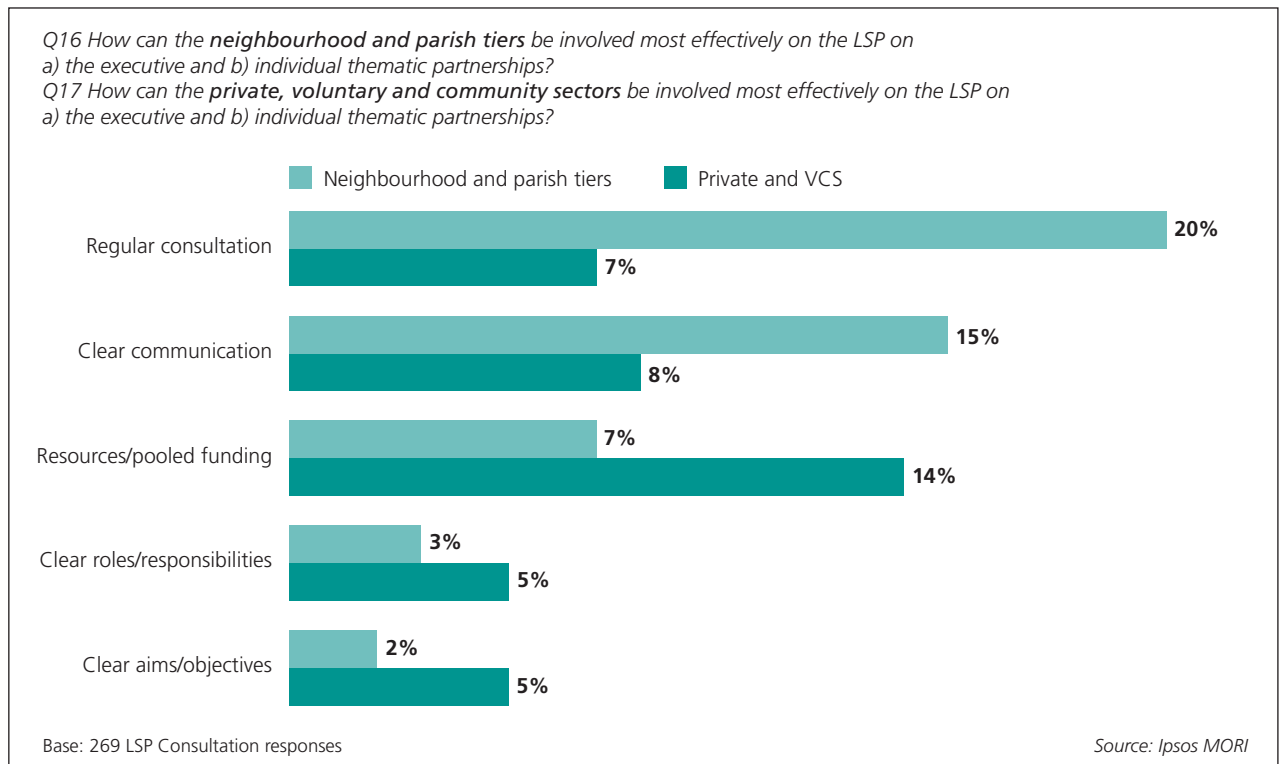
It was also suggested that Communities and Local Government could look at how other government departments (e.g. the Department for Trade and Industry) and business-led organisations (e.g. Business in the Community and the Confederation of British Industry) work with local, regional and sub-regional structures to develop good practice in encouraging private sector investment. Furthermore, 4% suggested that covering the costs of the involvement for both the private sector and VCS would make their involvement more effective.

Of the 46 community, voluntary or not-for-profit groups that responded to this question, over a third (35%) explicitly stated that the LSP should contain nominated representatives from the VCS. One-in-seven (15%) feel this should be via thematic partnerships and one-in-eleven (9%) via the executive board.

Like neighbourhood and parish tiers, one-in-nine respondents (11%) stated the private sector and VCS is already well involved and the systems and processes they currently have in place are effective.

The chart overleaf shows the actions respondents felt were needed to make involvement more effective. For neighbourhood and parish tiers these are regular consultation and clear communication. For the private sector and VCS these are resources/pooled funding and clear communication.

Theme 9: Ensuring Wide Representation – Question 16 & 17



Theme 10: Providing Legislative Foundation

Question 18 on consultation paper: *Would a duty to cooperate with the local authority, in producing and implementing the Community Strategy, help to set LSPs on a firmer footing and better enable their enhanced delivery coordination role?*

Question 19 on consultation paper: *If so, what obligations, such as attendance, financial or staff support, would be useful to place on partners?*

Question 20 on consultation paper: *If so, which public sector agencies would the duty be most sensibly placed on?*

Question 21 on consultation paper: *Should there be a statutory duty on local authorities and named partners to promote the engagement of the voluntary and community sectors in the LSP?*

Background in Consultation Document

As all LSPs begin to move towards a greater delivery coordination role, as opposed to operating in a purely advisory capacity, it is important to consider whether to set them on a firmer footing by clarifying and formalising their role, and ensuring the involvement of key agencies. This could better enable them to fulfill this much more substantive role and could also provide the basis for holding the partnership to account. Whilst a statutory duty to cooperate in the production of the Sustainable Community Strategy (and LAA) can only be placed on key statutory agencies, in practice the partnership would need to encompass a much wider group of partners and it may therefore be helpful to also require the local authority, as part of their initiation role, to involve the voluntary, community and private sectors.

The main benefits of providing the LSP with some form of legislative foundation would be:

- a) To send a strong signal from national government that partnership working across the whole set of issues in an area is important;
- b) To reinforce and clarify the LSP's role as the 'partnership of partnerships', particularly in relation to individual thematic partnerships with a statutory foundation;
- c) To provide an opportunity to reiterate the centrality of the local authority's role to the LSP by giving them a clear initiation role;
- d) To set out the minimum expectations being placed on partner members and thereby avoid confusion; and;
- e) In areas of poorer partnership working, to ensure that the key public sector agencies are engaged in the LSP.

Over six-in-ten of respondents explicitly stated that they agree in principal that there should be a duty to cooperate placed on key public sector agencies, including one-in-ten (10%) who feel that LSPs should be given statutory powers or have some kind of legal status. Advantages cited for a duty to cooperate include:

- An increase in accountability (as explicitly mentioned by 9%); and;
- It would enable target-led delivery (3%).

Some positive views towards the duty to cooperate are:

NCVO believes that continuing to promote LSPs without giving them a statutory basis will result in confusion across the country, with some areas faring better than others. A duty on public sector bodies to participate with one another at a local level goes some way to addressing this.

National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Yes, this would be welcomed. Something is needed to re-emphasise the importance central government is placing on partnership working. In non-NRF areas the lack of need to cooperate due to NRF money means that partnerships will continue to be voluntary with local partners having no requirement to field officers of a suitable level. The LAA will also be a driver for greater engagement/participation.

Bassetlaw LSP

Views on Duty to cooperate at Q18	No. (Base = 301)	%
Yes, agree/LSPs should be given statutory powers	189	63
Participation should not be obligatory	76	25
A range of further views were expressed:		
Helps increase accountability	28	9
Arrangements should be made locally not centrally	15	5
Needs adequate financial support	14	5
Needs best practice guidance	14	5
Enables target-led delivery	8	3

The majority of respondents believed that a duty to cooperate with the local authority, in producing and implementing the Community Strategy, would help improve LSPs' coordination. The duty would enhance transparency, encourage partnerships, allow for mapping and pooling of budgets and help to develop a clear vision and shared direction of travel. Obligations should include a commitment to senior level attendance and involvement. There should be sanctions (possibly financial) for failing to comply. The obligations could be extended to Non-departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs).

Urban Forum (following extensive consultations with member organisations)

The NHS is keen to play an active and meaningful role in broader partnerships. Indeed, LSPs can make a significant contribution to improving health and well-being and tackling health inequalities. Strong NHS input is therefore essential. However, sometimes it is difficult for public sector organisations, with challenging targets and limited funds, to prioritise the longer term upstream agendas. Invoking a duty to cooperate could help in maintaining a high priority for this work. This would need to be firmly placed in the context of the role of the LSP in relation to SCSs. The duty to cooperate could have implications for the boards of other organisations, who will wish to be clear about the contribution and commitment of staff and officers to a partnership which is ultimately accountable to the local authority. There may therefore need to be a mechanism for non-executives to link with local authority councillors in the spirit of transparency and recognising individual boards' wider responsibilities within which LSP and SCS work is undertaken. This also raises the importance of those sitting on LSPs representing and linking back to their wider constituency, e.g. PCT representative representing all health partners.

Any new duty would ideally be followed through in performance management arrangements. This should not however merely be an add-on to existing performance management arrangements but an opportunity to fundamentally review how performance is incentivised and prioritised within a partnership environment.

The development of more shared targets across agencies/sectors may actually prove just as effective in promoting stronger and more effective partnership working as invoking a duty to cooperate.

South West Peninsula Strategic Health Authority

As shown above, a quarter of respondents explicitly disagree that participation should be obligatory. From the responses, it is apparent that some feel that a duty will not result in partners being more involved in LSP activities; rather, that coercion will mean they pay lip service to the role. The remaining 12% who do not explicitly agree or disagree can be classified as ambivalent, undecided or see both advantages and disadvantages to the duty to cooperate.

A duty to cooperate will not in itself ensure the success of an LSP as it would be possible to pay lip service to the duty without effectively engaging in partnership activity. Ultimately, it is the synergy between the organisation and the willingness to work together towards shared outcomes that lead to successful outcomes. Organisations that come to the table only because they are statutorily obliged to are unlikely to fully buy in to this shared approach.

County Councils Network

Clear rationalisation, coordination and added value will be essential if the time commitment required by representatives is to be justified.

Association of Police Authorities

Others question who the duty would be placed upon. Many feel the duty can only be placed on public sector organisations, and generally, as these organisations are already engaged with the LSP, they feel the duty would make little difference. In particular, one council suggests that the duty should be around implementing the community strategy, rather than cooperating with the LSP.

The duty could only be imposed on public sector partners and this would be pointless as they are already round the table and actively producing the community strategy. What would be helpful would be the duty to implement the community strategy so that it becomes a 'live' document that drives activity and resources as agreed by the whole partnership.

Kent County Council

Nevertheless, some public sector organisations also feel there should not be a duty to cooperate. Nearly a third of public sector organisations and one of the two quangos who responded feel participation should not be obligatory. This is chiefly because they do not have the resources (financial and staff time) to engage effectively with each LSP.

Essentially, it seems there needs to be a balance between imposing duties on partners, and creating incentives for partnership working.

Looking at responses of those who **do not explicitly state support** for the duty to cooperate, some of these concerns mentioned above come to light:

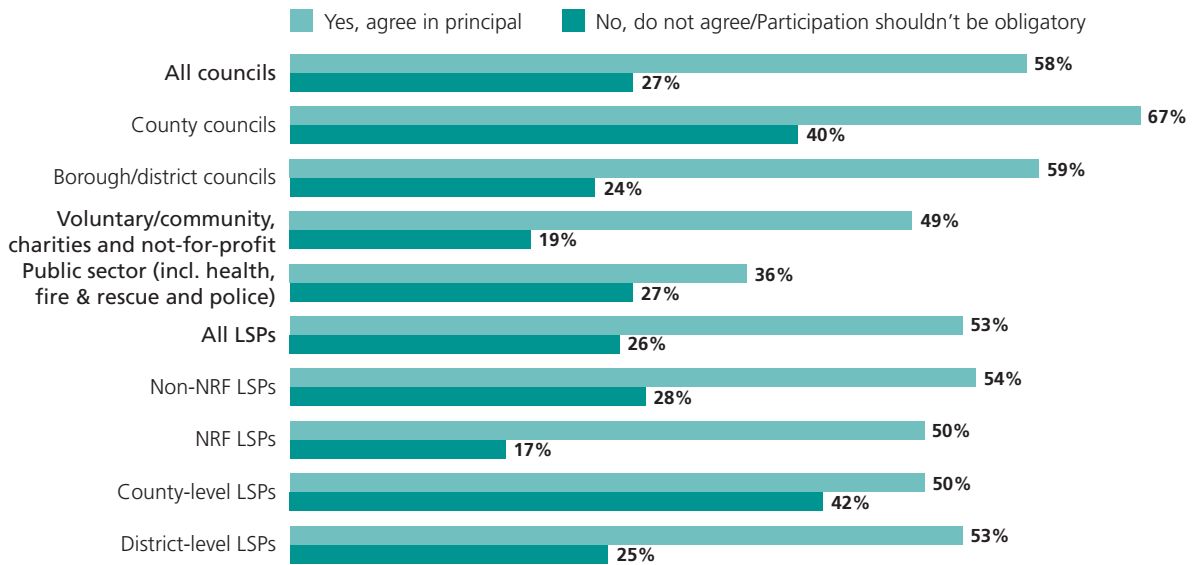
Key issues for those who do not explicitly agree with the proposed duty to cooperate at Q18 Base: 123 respondents who do not say "yes, agree" at Q18	<i>n</i>	%
Participation should not be obligatory	54	44
Arrangements should be made locally not centrally	9	7
Needs adequate financial support	8	7
Clarification of roles needed	8	7
Needs best practice guidance	7	6

The chart below examines the levels of support and opposition to this proposal by type of organisation. County councils feel more positively towards the duty to cooperate than borough/district councils (67% vs 59%), although, by the same token, county councils are also more likely to disagree with the proposals than their borough/district counterparts (40% vs 24%).

Non-NRF LSPs (54%) are slightly more likely to agree with the duty to cooperate than NRF-funded LSPs (50%), although conversely they are also more likely to *disagree* with it. Both county and district-level LSPs are similar to the average in feeling the duty is appropriate, although county-level LSPs are more likely to feel participation should not be obligatory (42% vs. 25% overall).

Theme 10: Providing a Legislative Foundation – Question 18

Q18 Would a duty to cooperate with the local authority in producing and implementing the Community Strategy help to set LSPs on a firmer footing and better enable their enhanced delivery coordination?



Base: 301 LSP Consultation responses

Source: Ipsos MORI

When asked what obligations respondents think would be most useful, the three most frequently mentioned obligations are:

- Pooled resources or adequate financial support (31%);
- Attendance at meetings (16%);
- Dedicated support staff (7%).

Other duties or requirements mentioned include:

- Sharing evidence and performance data across the LSP;
- Participating in council-led scrutiny;
- Participating in community planning and collaborating on the development, implementation and review of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement;
- Translating Sustainable Community Strategy priorities into their own service plans and being accountable for its relevant targets.

When we look at only those who say they “agree” with a duty to cooperate at Q18, one in ten (11%) of this group think that individual LSPs should be able to decide which obligations should be imposed on partners (rather than the decision being made by central government). Additionally, 6% feel that some form of best practice guidance or guidelines would be useful. Some responses state that the examples of obligations given in the question (attendance, financial and support staff) relate more to *participation* than *cooperation* and so they would ask for clarification on the purpose of the duty.

Key issues concerning obligations cited by those who explicitly agree with the proposed duty to cooperate at Q19 Base: all respondents saying "yes, agree" at Q18	<i>n</i>	%
Needs adequate financial support/pooled finances	57	31
Attendance is critical	36	20
Arrangements should be made locally/not centrally	21	11
More support/support staff is key	13	7
Could help to ease pressure/help with resources	11	6
Need best practice guidance/guidelines/a template	11	6
Would be helpful for target-led delivery	9	5
Would help to increase accountability	8	4
LA should attend/contribute to meetings	8	4
Local authorities/councils should fund LSPs	6	3
Key delivery partners/agencies should fund LSPs	4	2
Extend duty to all named partners to ensure LSP membership is representative	3	2
Central govt should fund LSP s (including NHS/PCT/environment agencies/employment bodies and youth services)	7	4
Extend duty to private sector	2	1
Clarification/roles/legal standing	2	1
Less bureaucracy is critical	1	1

When asked which agencies the duty should be placed on, most interpreted this to mean which agencies should contribute *financially* to the partnership. Most statutory agencies were mentioned as highlighted in the chart below:

Agencies on whom obligation should be placed cited by those who explicitly agree with the proposed duty to cooperate at Q20 Base: all respondents saying "yes, agree" at Q18	<i>n</i>	%
NHS/hospital/PCT	89	48
Emergency services (i.e. police/fire)	88	48
Local authorities/councils	60	33
Education bodies (all mentions) (i.e. schools/colleges)	42	23
Employment bodies (all mentions) (Connexions/Jobcentre Plus)	35	19
Environment Agency	19	10
Regional assemblies/RDAs	19	10
Central govt. should fund LSPs	13	7
Arrangements should be made locally/not centrally	12	7
Housing providers	12	7
Key delivery partners/agencies	4	2
Major service providers	4	2
Probation Service	4	2
Social services	3	2
Extend duty to private sector	2	1
Need best practice guidance/guidelines/a template	2	1
Extend duty to ensure LSP membership is representative	1	1
Youth service	1	1
Clarification/roles/legal standing required	1	1

Some organisations feel that the duty should be placed on all public sector bodies.

"I think the local LSPs should be the known first stop in any joint working partnership problem. This should be advertised, given teeth and known to all. Indeed, a condition of any public funding to anyone anywhere should be conditional upon cooperating and working with the local LSPs."

Berwick Borough Strategic Partnership

"All statutory bodies that can contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being in a locality."

Local Government Association

They are also keen that if any duty to cooperate is introduced that the LSP remains a partnership and other agencies without the duty are not sidelined.

"It is important that the LSP is seen as a true partnership and not dominated by one partner."

Durham Strategic Partnership

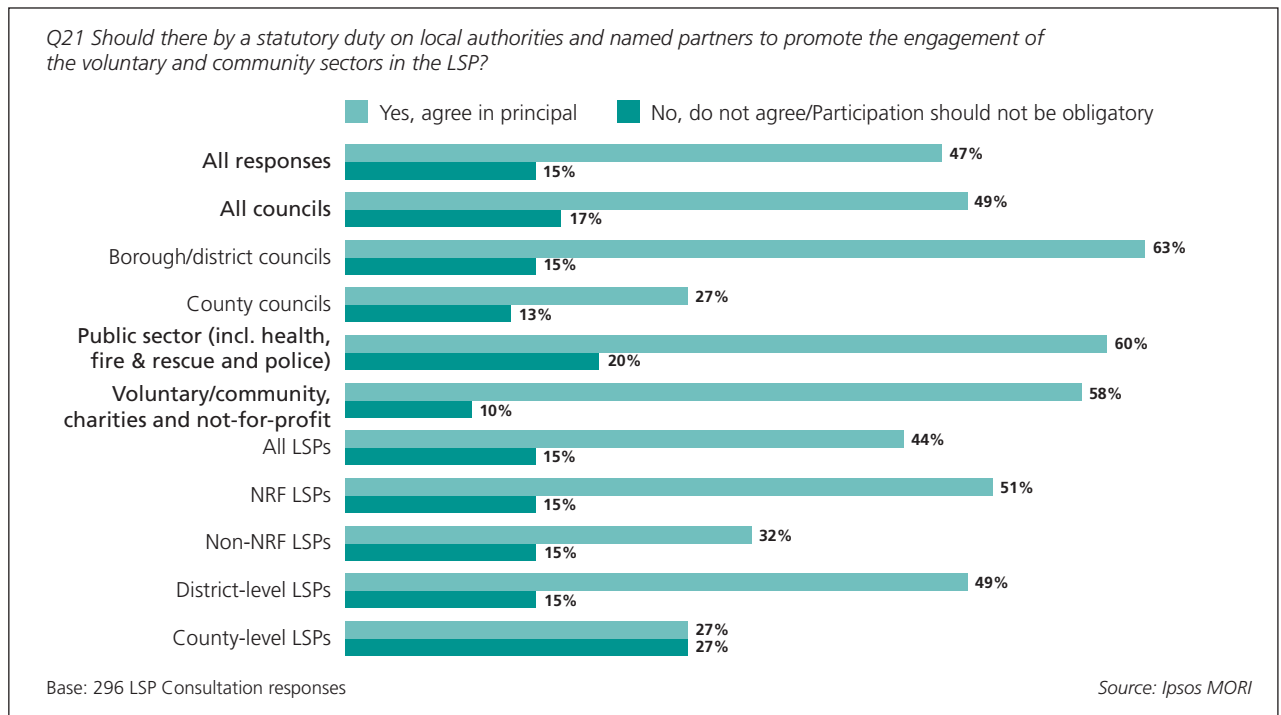
VCS and Private Sector Engagement

According to the response of a local government organisation which separately consulted its members, a number of local authorities suggested to them that even if a duty to cooperate cannot be placed on non-statutory partners (e.g. the voluntary and community sector and private sector), there are other ways of placing similar obligations on some of them through, for example, funding or grant-aid conditions.

Nearly half (48%) of organisations agree in principle that there should be a statutory duty on local authorities and others to promote the engagement of the VCS. This is compared to 15% who think participation should not be obligatory. A further 6% feel that the decision should be taken at a local level, rather than being imposed by central government.

The chart below shows that borough/district councils and district-level LSPs are much more positive about the proposal than their county counterparts. NRF-funded LSPs are also more positive than those who do not receive this funding. This may be due to a concern that the duty will require more time and resources than they have available. Both the public and voluntary/community/not-for-profit sectors appear to feel the duty would be useful.

Theme 10: Providing a Legislative Foundation – Question 21



Whilst many organisations feel engaging the VCS is a positive step, some are concerned about what the duty would involve in practice. Many cite resources as being a key barrier for further engagement and it appears they would be grateful for additional funding in order to meet this obligation.

“The main obstacle for further engagement from public sector partners is staffing and resources, which are to be channelled into government priorities in order to meet targets. Therefore, additional resources would no doubt be helpful in strengthening engagement.”

South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance

Accountability

Theme 11: Accountability between Partners

Question 22 on consultation paper: *Should each partnership be encouraged to produce protocols or 'partnership agreements' between partners to ensure clear lines of accountability for the delivery of agreed outcomes?*

Question 23 on consultation paper: *We believe that if partnership working was included as part of other key agencies' assessments it would be effective in securing greater commitment from other public sector agencies. What are your views?*

Background in Consultation Document

For LSPs to be effective and agree local priorities and actions that improve local services, all parties need to be clear as to what is expected of them and deliver relevant actions. As discussed earlier, clarifying the role of the LSP and ensuring strong positive leadership from the local authority is also crucial. However, clarity of role and effective leadership alone will not ensure clear and transparent lines of accountability. Clear accountability requires:

Within the LSP, each partner is responsible for the actions that they agree to undertake, and as such are accountable for the delivery of those actions to the LSP, to their parent organisation and to the local community. It is essential that this accountability between partners is clarified and understood. Formal agreements or protocols between partners can be an effective way of ensuring clarity about who is responsible for the different elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA delivery.

The LSP is accountable to different audiences:

- a) To local people through the democratic process through the local authority and, more directly, in listening to and informing local communities. The overview and scrutiny role of backbench ward councillors has a clear role here.
- b) central government in relation to outcomes agreed in the LAA.
- c) To the local authority executive, as ultimate responsibility for the LSPs actions rests here.

When asked whether each partnership should be encouraged to produce protocols or 'partnerships agreements' to ensure clear lines of accountability, 180 respondents (or 60% of those answering the question) said they agree, or perceive this to be a good thing. There were many advantages spontaneously cited for increasing accountability and producing protocols. These include:

- They can help to clarify roles/responsibilities (as explicitly mentioned by 49 respondents);
- They can increase understanding of aims and operations between partners (42 respondents);

- They are a sign of commitment towards delivery against specific targets (39 respondents);
- They can help to secure commitment of partners (18 respondents);
- They are beneficial to local communities and can help with specific projects (16 respondents).

We would welcome protocols or 'partnership agreements' between partners to ensure clear lines of accountability for the delivery of agreed outcomes. It is important that all parties are clear about what is expected of them. As VCS bodies are independent and non-statutory, protocols or 'partnership agreements' should understand and recognise their respective aims, purposes and accountabilities.

Citizens Advice

Just 39 respondents disagreed with producing protocols, or thought they had a negative aspect to them. This was mainly because protocols are perceived to be bureaucratic or a waste of resources (as explicitly mentioned by 27 organisations).

"In principle, the production of protocols and partnership agreements would be sensible. However, there is a need to ensure that the focused resource and time is spent on delivering outcomes and not on setting up bureaucratic processes and structures."

Association of Police Authorities

"Yes, whilst this is important, we do urge that a balanced approach is taken and that partnership working isn't subsumed by weighty legal agreements/obligations between partners."

Wychavon LSP

"We believe that formal partnership arrangements and protocols are vital to achieve clarity and transparency for real accountability."

Local Government Ombudsman

Furthermore, a handful of respondents (11) feel that trust between partners is more important and will lead to stronger partnerships than formal protocols or 'partnership agreements'.

Lastly, a small number of respondents (seven) say that they already have something that could be considered a protocol or 'partnership agreement' in place.

Turning to the second question in this theme, 172 (or 59%) of organisations agree that if partnership working was included as part of other key agencies' assessments it would be effective in securing greater commitment from other public sector agencies.

“Yes, if partners were assessed on their effectiveness and contributions to partnership working it would encourage them to be more involved.”

North Kesteven Local Strategic Partnership

While most organisations would consider partnership working to be important, eight responses disagree with including it as part of key agencies’ assessments or feel this is overly bureaucratic and a waste of resources. Other respondents emphasised the need to consider the practicalities of encouraging partnership working:

“There is a need to embed partnership working as part of mainstream activity. Inclusion as part of other key agency assessment is unlikely to address this cultural shift: however it may help.”

Wolverhampton City Council

Theme 12: Involvement of Local Councillors

Question 24 on consultation paper: *What do you see as the key role for executive councillors within LSPs?*

Question 25 on consultation paper: *What do you see as the appropriate role for backbenchers particularly in ensuring a high quality of local engagement?*

Question 26 on consultation paper: *What would make councillors' powers of overview and scrutiny more effective in scrutinizing the 4 blocks of the LAA?*

Background in Consultation Document

Elected members of local authorities have a unique role in carrying responsibility for the overall balance of governance in an area and being directly accountable to citizens. As such, their support to the LSP and Community Strategy process is crucial to achieving success.

Currently, there is a high level of local authority representation on LSPs (99 per cent of LSPs have councillors represented). However, the function they are performing is not always the most appropriate one and existing council mechanisms like the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are not being used to the best effect. Research into the current progress made by LSPs on Community Strategies suggests that the precise role of elected members of the local authority, both the executive and backbenchers, is currently not understood.

The types of roles that respondents feel executive councillors and backbenchers should undertake are fairly similar and generally involve working with the communities they represent. However, there are nuances between the types of roles that are perceived to be the most important for the elected members.

Out of the top five roles mentioned for both executive members and backbenchers, four are linked to working with the community. For **executive members** these are considered the most important: community leadership, identifying local issues/needs, communicating/feeding back to the community and being involved in community engagement activities. The fifth most important role is to scrutinise and assess the LSP's performance.

We recognise that, as local authorities are democratically elected, the LSP is ultimately accountable to the local authority. Executive councillors should play a leading role in board and thematic partnerships.

West Cumbria LSP

Whilst community activities also feature amongst backbenchers' key roles, scrutinising and assessing performance, identifying local issues/needs and getting involved in community engagement activities are considered more important than community leadership and communicating/feeding back to the community.

"The scrutiny panel should receive regular reports on the LSP to give them a more in-depth understanding. There should also be presentations to all councillors on the role of the LSP."

North Somerset Partnership

The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) believes that strengthening the role of [overview and scrutiny committees] to include a partnership remit and giving the OSC the ability to hold other public sector bodies to account will benefit the local community, as well as adding credence to the scrutiny mechanism. However, any strengthened scrutiny role must not compromise the independence of the VCS and business representatives on the partnership. Open, transparent honest and accountable ways of working are promoted throughout the sector, and expanding the scrutiny remit would place unnecessary additional burdens upon independent partners.

Any strengthened overview and scrutiny functions of a council (i.e. extending the remit to clearly cover partnership working) must be publicised widely and VCOs (and citizens) should be made aware of how to raise an issue. Local VCOs need to be able to fully engage in not only agenda-setting for the LSP, but also in holding the partnership to account. NCVO believes that it is vital to ensure all members of an LSP are in agreement about the partnership structure, and that all members are given adequate opportunity to influence and scrutinise members of the board.

National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

The table below shows how respondents saw the different roles for executive councillors and backbenchers within the LSP.

Q24: What do you see as the key role for executive councillors within LSPs?

Q25: What do you see as the appropriate role for backbenchers particularly in ensuring a high quality of local engagement?

	Executive councillors		Backbenchers	
	No. (Base=281)	%	No. (Base=267)	%
Community leadership	90	32	41	15
Identifying local issues/needs	56	20	101	38
Communicating/feeding back to local community	45	16	35	13
Involved in community engagement activities	34	12	95	36
Scrutinising/assessing performance	34	12	68	25
Accountable to the council for targets/projects	29	10	8	3
Promoting and building relationships	26	9	10	4
Providing local community's voice in Local authority/LSP (for councillors) & providing local community's voice in Parliament (for backbenchers)	18	6	17	6
Informing council members of LSP activity	15	5	10	4
Supporting and securing support for the LSP	8	3	12	4

This same information is shown in the following chart to illustrate the nuances between the roles for executive councillors and backbenchers.

Theme 12: Involvement of Local Councillors – Questions 24 & 25



Despite many organisations being able to clearly state the role they feel executive councillors and backbenchers should take, others feel this needs to be clarified further by central government or agreed locally (21 respondents for executive councillors and 19 for backbenchers). This is primarily to avoid conflicts of interest arising if they are not sure if they should be representing their ward, local authority or the partnership as an entity.

More generally, a small percentage of those who responded provided more specific feedback. 15 respondents say executive councillors' roles should include being on the executive board, or chairing the partnership and a further four say backbenchers should also perform this role. Conversely, a small minority explicitly state that this should not be part of their role (six for executive councillors and three for backbenchers), and a handful more believe more involvement of councillors and backbenchers is unnecessary (four and three respectively). In total, 10 organisations feel there should not be a role at all for either executive councillors or backbenchers.

Case Study: Carrick Communities LSP

The Leader of Carrick Council sits on the LSP, providing a direct link to the cabinet. Particular roles are taking executive decisions and contributing to the delivery of outcomes. Another portfolio holder is a member of the LSP's Investment Board (a sub-group of the LSP) and of the Carrick Community Alliance (the Community Network).

Turning to question 26, there are three key areas that respondents believe would make councillors' power of overview and scrutiny more effective. These are:

- A more clearly-defined process so there is clarity about what councillors are expected to do (as explicitly mentioned by 140 respondents);
- Training and further guidance about the role (33 respondents); and;
- Clarification of which service providers are responsible and accountable for the targets in the LAA (18 respondents).

These key areas are mainly referred to by district-level LSPs and councils as opposed to their county-level counterparts. Indeed, it appears that generally county-level LSPs do not have a lot to say about this issue, as only nine responded to this particular question. The table below shows the breakdown according to different types of organisation.

Q26: What would make councillors' powers of overview and scrutiny more effective in scrutinising the four blocks of the LAA?

	Clearly defined process		Training and further guidance		Determining accountability for targets	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All responses (Base=258)	140	53	33	13	18	7
All councils (Base=78)	47	59	8	10	9	11
Borough/District councils (Base=45)	30	65	3	7	5	11
County councils (Base=14)	6	43	3	21	1	7
All LSPs (Base=119)	69	53	17	13	7	5
District-level LSPs (Base=70)	36	51	12	17	4	6
County-level LSPs (Base=9)	4	40	1	10	0	0

Theme 13: Involvement of Members of Parliament

Question 27 on consultation paper: *What would be the most appropriate way for a Member of Parliament to be involved with the LSP and how can we ensure that it is complementary to the role of local councillors?*

Background in Consultation Document

Unlike councillors, Members of Parliament are not well represented on LSPs – only 6 per cent of LSPs regard their MP as being a core member and a further 16 per cent have their MP represented as part of the partnership. As LSPs have become the key strategic partnership in an area, it is important that they involve MPs. MPs have substantial democratic legitimacy in the local area and the ability to bring a wide range of partners to the table to produce genuinely collaborative working. There is no set way to do this and current practice varies between the MP chairing the LSP to receiving papers and attending an annual event. Each area will need to consider the most appropriate mechanism for them.

Of the 316 organisations who answered this question, just 27 spontaneously stated that MPs should have a seat on the board or be a member of the LSP in some way. However, 20 did not think they should have a formal or direct role and a further 22 did not think they should have any kind of role at all. The relatively high numbers challenging the implicit assumption in the question that MPs should have a role is stark, particularly in comparison to the proportion postulating similar feelings about executive councillors and backbenchers (see previous section).

The main reason given for MPs not being involved is due to a lack of capacity as there are so many demands on their time. Another reason provided is one of geography, as there can often be more than one MP working within an LSP's boundaries.

"The constituents of the MPs for x are not coterminous with the LSP boundaries. It is important that MPs are involved but we have no suggestions of how this might be."

**East Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership and
East Cambridgeshire District Council**

MPs, with greater access to Westminster and Ministers, can add a different and useful perspective.

Birmingham Strategic Partnership

Turning to suggestions as to how MPs could be involved with the LSP in a way that is complementary to the role of local councillors, the most prominent one, as put forward by 70 respondents (one-fifth of all answering) is to champion local causes at a national level.

“There is potentially a danger in involving MPs in that this will be an opportunity to “politicise” the discussions, and to focus on political concerns rather than community concerns. However, the balance to that argument is that the involvement of MPs could actually provide useful knowledge of the key issues and concerns at local level and also give an opportunity for these to be fed back nationally.”

Association of Police Authorities

Another role for MPs, as mentioned by 50 organisations, is to be aware of developments and kept informed of progress, including problems arising. There were many suggestions as to how this could be achieved including improving communication between LSPs and MPs (63), providing them with regular reports (e.g. meeting minutes/paper briefings) (46) and attending annual conferences and/or annual general meetings (40).

Other functions include a consultancy role – as mentioned by 30 respondents. In practice this would mean LSPs drawing on MPs’ experiences particularly around decision-making, activities and projects and funding issues. Involving MPs in LSPs was seen by 23 respondents as a good way to build and maintain effective links between MPs and local councillors or indeed, the local authority in general.

Theme 14: Involvement of Communities Served

Question 28 on consultation paper: *How can we promote effective community engagement and involvement, from all sections of the community, in shaping local priorities and public services?*

Question 29 on consultation paper: *How can we maximise the opportunities for joint policy and joint activity on community engagement, including the LDF, the LAA and the Sustainable Community Strategy?*

Question 30 on consultation paper: *How can accountability to local people and businesses be enhanced?*

Background in Consultation Document

For LSPs to be effective, the local community, voluntary and private sectors must be engaged and their needs, priorities and views taken into account. To meet this criterion, LSPs need to be actively involving backbench and executive councilors, resident and community representatives in their decision-making. One of the three overarching objectives of Community Strategies is to promote social well-being – through facilitating community cohesion, reducing social exclusion and narrowing inequalities. This requires LSPs to be accountable to the wider community as well as partner bodies.

It is crucial that local residents are involved in a coherent way that makes the most efficient use of partner resources and residents' time. Under both the Local Area Agreement and Local Development Framework processes, the local authority is required to set out how the local community is involved in determining priorities and actions. The Community Strategy guidance also requires the local authority to consult local stakeholders when producing the Community Strategy. We believe it is critical that these different processes for involving the local community are complementary.

This part of the consultation resulted in a great many suggestions and recommendations for promoting community engagement and involvement. Interestingly, the LSP is generally seen to be the body who should be coordinating this (possibly via their community network), rather than the local authority: 34 organisations explicitly said this should be the role of the LSP compared with just six who feel it should be the local authority.

In terms of the actions required, the most crucial is considered to be having a shared understanding of what the community needs (as explicitly mentioned by 67 respondents). Naturally, this is seen as important in order to tailor engagement and involvement activity appropriately. Over one-fifth of organisations (63 in total) feel clear communication is important and a further 13 say in particular that the LSP's objectives need clearly communicating to local people.

Support for community groups to build up their capacity to be effectively engaged was mentioned by 59 organisations. The voluntary and community sector, charities and not-for-profit organisations feel this issue is the most important action to be undertaken in order to promote the involvement of all sections of the community, and is spontaneously mentioned by 11 of the 44 responding organisations. Other issues that are pertinent for this subgroup include having adequate resources – ideally in some form of dedicated or ring-fenced funding – and the LSP having an understanding of their needs. The table

below sets out the key actions mentioned by at least five per cent of respondents, compared directly against the voluntary and community sector’s opinions.

“Regular reporting back and a public openness and awareness-raising as to the purpose of an LSP... an annual public meeting or open event held with the opportunity for people to hold the LSP to account.”

North Somerset Partnership

Q28: How can we promote effective community engagement and involvement, from all sections of the community in shaping local priorities and public services?

	All respondents		VCS, charity and not-for-profit sector	
	No. (Base=279)	%	No. (Base=60)	%
Shared understanding of communities needs	67	24	13	22
Clear communication	63	23	12	20
Support/advice/involvement of partnerships	59	21	19	32
Resources/financial help/sharing resources/ring fencing/dedicated funds	48	17	9	15
Consultation	44	16	6	14
Effective marketing, promotion of benefits	22	8	5	8
Strategy	15	5	5	8
LSP more visible in the community	16	6	3	5
Share best practice	14	5	1	2

Organisations recognise the importance of joining up community engagement activities in order to reduce duplication of efforts, the wasting of resources and consultation fatigue within communities.

The LSP must ensure appropriate communication, joined-up thinking and consultation at all stages of the process. This must be inclusive of all sectors. A joint statement of community involvement would be beneficial.

East Riding LSP

Turning to question 29, similar actions were suggested for maximising the opportunities for joint policy and joint activity as were given for promoting effective community involvement. Again, the most important is to have a shared understanding of community needs (as mentioned by 45 out of the 261 respondents). Partnership working skills are also considered to be important if the most is going to be made of opportunities, as is clear communication (both mentioned by 33 organisations).

Q29: How can we maximise the opportunities for joint policy and joint activity on community engagement, including the Local Development Framework, the Local Area Agreement and the Sustainable Community Strategy?

	All respondents		VCS, charity and not-for-profit sector	
	No. (Base=256)	%	No. (Base=47)	%
Shared understanding of community needs	45	17	9	19
Clear communication	33	13	7	15
Improved partnership working skills	33	13	5	11
Top-down support	29	11	2	4
Resources/financial help/sharing resources/ring fencing/dedicated funds	29	11	4	9
Consultation	26	10	6	13
Share best practice	20	8	1	2
Clarity of vision/purpose	14	5	3	6

Example view: Bradford

The Bradford area has a multi-agency training programme for community engagement. All partners also have access to a shared electronic diary, which is run by the council, so all agencies are aware of when community engagement activity is taking place. They find this helps to reduce the amount of separate consultations in the district and avoids over-consulting communities.

Turning to question 30 and how accountability to local people and businesses can be enhanced, three-in-ten organisations (80 out of the 271 organisations who answered the question) feel that communicating clearly, particularly in relation to the LSP's objectives, is best. One-in-seven (41 respondents) think that a marketing strategy, which promotes the benefits of being involved in the LSP, would be a particularly effective form of communication. A further one-in-six (43 in total) believe that by setting targets and monitoring progress towards meeting them will help (although presumably this needs to be combined with feeding back the results to the community).

In order to achieve and fulfil these actions mentioned above, 14 organisations say that additional resources – preferably ring-fenced or dedicated – are needed to ensure accountability can be increased and improved in an effective manner.

Generally, the voluntary and community sector, charities and not-for-profit sector share the same views as respondents overall, although they tend to place more emphasis on an effective marketing strategy (22% feel this is a good idea compared to 15% overall). The chart below shows the key ways to enhance accountability and also illustrates how the VCS differs from responses overall.

Q30: How can accountability to local people and businesses be enhanced?

	All respondents		VCS, charity and not-for-profit sector	
	No. (Base=271)	%	No. (Base=50)	%
Clear communication (including objectives)	102	38	13	26
Effective marketing/promotion of benefits	41	15	9	18
Targets set and progress monitored	43	16	9	18
Scrutiny process	22	8	3	6
Partnership working skills	16	6	3	6
LSP more visible in the community	15	6	1	2

Theme 15: Capacity Issues

Question 31 on consultation paper: *What are your LSP's key support/skill gaps?*

Question 32 on consultation paper: *What extra or different support would be most helpful in shifting to a more delivery-focused role?*

Question 33 on consultation paper: *How would LSPs prefer to receive information and support; through guidance, toolkits, signposting to existing information, practical learning opportunities etc?*

Question 34 on consultation paper: *How can LSPs ensure that adequate learning and support provision is available to build the capacity of communities to engage with the LSP and its partners at the various levels?*

Question 35 on consultation paper: *What learning or development do you feel is required by LSPs in order to deliver sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level?*

Background in Consultation Document

Due to the shift in role towards co-coordinating delivery for all LSPs, their capacity is becoming increasingly important. LSPs are becoming more focused on the delivery of outcomes and the **skills needed** to develop and maintain effective LSPs have developed. LSPs now also need skills in performance management, planning, data collection, analysis and use of evidence and evaluation.

Influencing and collaboration skills are also vital in ensuring strong, effective leadership by the LSP. It is also recognised that with the increasing emphasis on engaging communities, LSPs need to develop the skills to ensure that this happens. There is a need for many LSPs to develop new approaches to involve the private sector and community sectors. LSP members and staff might also benefit from a development of specialist skills related to equality impact assessments and mainstreaming equalities.

There is a wide variation in the **level of resources** made available for developing the Sustainable Community Strategy. Over half of local authorities (57%) had a specific budget for developing the Community Strategy but the remainder had no budget for the development of the Community Strategy. There is a similarly wide range of staff levels. 69% of LSPs have only 1 or 2 people involved in the development of the Community Strategy. In comparison, NRF LSPs have, on average, 5 support staff and generally indicate that they have sufficient staff.

There is a wide range of **support and training** available for partners of LSPs. Some is directly focused on LSPs. Other training develops capacity in areas that have a strong impact on the effectiveness of an LSP, such as leadership, negotiation and partnership-building skills.

When asked about support needs and skill gaps, respondents tended to refer more to the former than latter. Nearly half (130 out of the 272 responding organisations) cited a need for more financial support, including dedicated or ring-fenced funding and 40 organisations stated staffing issues. In terms of skill gaps, the top mention was partnership working skills followed by project management skills (15% and 14% respectively). The table below shows the support needs and skill gaps mentioned by at least 2% of respondents:

Q31: What are your LSPs key support/skill gaps?

LSP key support/skill gaps	No. (Base = 272)	%
Support needs		
Financial support	130	48
Staffing support	40	15
Skill gaps		
Partnership working skills	41	15
Project management skills	38	14
Training needed (general)	40	14
Communication	28	11
Research/consultation	22	8
Guidance on LSP functions	15	6
Leadership skills	15	5
Service delivery	13	5
Clarity of purpose/vision/focus	13	5
Effective marketing/promotion of benefits	11	4
Sustainability issues	7	2
Coordinating/running/chairing meetings	7	2
Information/who to contact	6	2

Responses also differed according to type of LSP. Looking at LSPs which receive Neighbourhood Renewal funding and those which do not, unsurprisingly, more non-NRF LSPs cite staffing resources than their counterparts who do receive Neighbourhood Renewal funding (5 out of 55 (9%) and 35 out of 217 (16%)). Similar proportions mention financial support (49% of NRF and 48% of non-NRF LSPs – or 27 and 103 in real terms). Another major difference between the two types is that nearly twice as many NRF LSPs explicitly state that they need training than non-NRF LSPs (22% vs. 13% or 12 and 28 in real terms).

ASC takes the view that LSPs have a crucial role to play in delivering sustainable communities in their local areas. We fully agree with the analysis underpinning the consultation paper: for LSPs to successfully deliver their part in achieving sustainable communities both LSP staff and members need to develop their skills and capacity. Whilst a number of recent research studies have emphasised the need for effective leadership and community engagement in LSPs, little has been said about the large number of other generic skills required if LSPs are to be successful. The illustrative examples set out in the consultation paper provide a useful starting point, but further work needs to be carried out. In developing a more comprehensive list, it will be important to differentiate between the individual skills (and skill sets) needed at different stages of an LSP's evolution, such as the move from strategy formulation to delivery and the different skills needed by LSP staff, from those of LSP members. In addition, the move from Community Strategies to Sustainable Community Strategies and the introduction of Local Area Agreements suggest that skills and knowledge focused on delivering the eight components of a sustainable community will also be required, as well as an understanding of the principles of sustainable development.

Academy for Sustainable Communities

Turning to county and district-level LSPs, similar proportions mention financial support as being key – 55% of county-level LSPs and 54% of district-level LSPs (or six out of 11 and 43 out of 80 in real terms).

In terms of skill gaps, the same proportions feel partnership working skills are lacking (18% of both county district-level LSPs – or two and 15 in real terms), although more district-level LSPs feel they are lacking in project management skills – 15 compared to one county-level LSP.

Unsurprisingly, similar support needs were cited as being helpful in the shift towards a more delivery-focused role as were mentioned for support needs and skill gaps. Again, nearly half (130 out of 271 respondents) say financial support and 24 name staffing resources. They also feel more support to help with their skill gaps would be useful – 28 mention partnership working skills and 26 cite project management skills. The table below shows where the extra or different support is requested by at least three per cent of respondents.

Q32: What extra or different support would be most helpful in shifting to a more delivery-focused role?

LSP key support/skill gaps	No. (Base = 271)	%
Support needs		
Financial support	130	48
Staffing support	24	9
Top-down guidance/support for how to fulfil the service delivery role	16	6
Skill needs		
Partnership working skills	28	10
Project management skills	26	10
Research/consultation	9	3
Clear communication	7	3
Knowledge/understanding gaps		
Clear targets set and progress monitored	25	9
Clarity of purpose/vision/focus	14	5
Guidance on LSP functions	11	4
Accountability	10	4

Only a few responses allude to who should provide this support. Fourteen organisations say they would like best practice examples to be shared amongst LSPs and the organisations they are comprised of, and five organisations feel this information should come from the Government.

Again, there are interesting differences between the types of LSPs. Far fewer LSPs who receive Neighbourhood Renewal funding cite financial resources as being most helpful in shifting to a more delivery-focused role than those who do not (38% vs. 51% – or 21 out of 56 and 109 out of 215 in real terms). This is fairly unsurprising in itself, although conversely, fewer non-NRF LSPs refer to staffing resources as something that would help them shift to a more delivery-focused role – 8% compared to 13% (17 and 7 LSPs in real terms).

Differences in terms of the skills are again pronounced as more NRF LSPs mention partnership working and project management than those who do not receive Neighbourhood Renewal funds. One-in-seven (8 in total) compared with one in 11 (20 in total) state partnership working, and one-in-six (nine in total) compared with just one-in-12 (17 in total) say project management skills.

Turning to the differences between district and county-level LSPs, financial and staffing support is considerably more of an issue for those at a district level – whilst no county-level LSPs mention extra staffing. Conversely, there is little difference between the two in terms of the main skills they request extra or different support for. This is illustrated in the table below.

Q32: What extra or different support would be most helpful in shifting to a more delivery-focused role? – Differences between district and county-level LSPs

	All respondents		District-level LSPs		County-level LSPs	
	No. (Base = 271)	%	No. (Base = 79)	%	No. (Base = 9)	%
Support						
Financial support	130	48	43	54	4	44
Staffing support	24	9	11	14	0	0
Skills						
Partnership working skills	28	11	7	9	1	11
Project management skills	26	10	7	9	1	11

Question 33 asks how LSPs would prefer to receive information and support. Fifty organisations said that all of the means mentioned in the question – namely through guidance, signposting to existing information and practical learning opportunities. Some organisations also said that it would be best if a variety of methods were used, so that LSPs can choose the most appropriate for them.

The qualities required for successful leadership identified at our recent Northern Way Skills for Regeneration conference were: passion, motivation, charisma, vision, flexibility, open-mindedness, being inclusive, confidence in uncertain environments, political awareness, effective community engagement skills, understanding capacity issues, creating common agendas, being a good influencer, having developed communication skills, listening well and using information well, and effective partnership working.

There was the recognition that individuals do not have all these skills but there was the need to build teams in which members' skills are complementary. This learning does not all have to be through course-based provision. Work-based approaches (e.g. mentoring, coaching, work shadowing, networking and skills sharing) offer alternative models.

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

In terms of specific methods, 42 indicated that training would be useful, 40 mentioned sharing best practice and 13 believe information from events or practical learning sessions would be most effective.

A variety of organisations or modes of communication were suggested to deliver the information and support. Specifically these were:

- Internet/websites (as explicitly mentioned by 22 respondents);
- Government (15 respondents);
- Media (six respondents) and;
- Non-government organisations (three respondents).

Online toolkits which can then be adapted to local needs e.g. frameworks for a communication strategy, consultation strategy, funding strategy etc. In addition, there needs to be a dedicated national LSP website which can be a resource for all LSPs.

Redditch Partnership

Q33. How would LSPs prefer to receive information and support: through guidance, toolkits, signposting existing information, practical learning opportunities etc?	No. (Base = 266)	%
All of them/all of the above	51	19
Training needed	42	16
Share best practice	40	15
Guidance on LSP functions	27	10
Top-down support	22	8
Financial help/sharing financial resources	22	8
Information from internet/websites	22	8
Clear communication	19	7
Information from Government	15	6
Clearer/concise/relevant information in useable format	8	3
Information from media	6	2
Research/consultation	5	2
Information from NGOs	3	1

Question 34 is concerned with how LSPs can ensure that adequate learning and support provision is available to build the capacity of communities to engage with the LSP and its partners at the various levels. Over half of responding organisations (140 out of 268) feel that financial support is the most effective way. This is echoed by the organisations that are more likely to represent the community (VCS, charities and the not-for-profit sector), as 31 (out of 55) also believe more monetary resources are crucial.

In addition, and reflecting previous findings about the LSP being the key coordinator and facilitator of community engagement (see question 28), many respondents feel that community capacity-building and facilitating the engagement of communities with the LSP should be the role of the Community Empowerment Network, and the additional funding should be used to fund their staff and activities. Other ways mentioned to build capacity include providing training (53) and sharing best practice (21).

Q34. How can LSPs ensure that adequate learning and support provision is available to build the capacity of communities to engage with the LSP and its partners?	No. (Base = 268)	%
More resources/financial help	140	52
Training needed	53	20
Top-down support	51	19
Understanding of what's needed for the community	27	10
Share best practice	21	8
LSPs should coordinate community engagement	17	6
Better partnership working skills	11	4
Employ more staff	9	3
Make LSP more visible in the community	6	2
Representation for disadvantaged groups (e.g. the old, disabled)	4	1

The final question in the consultation asked what learning or development is required by LSPs in order to deliver sustainable communities. In response to this, one-fifth of responding organisations (59 out of 268) feel that some form of training would be useful. Nearly as many (41) feel this training should be about sustainable communities and how to plan to achieve them. Some respondents mention they would benefit from this training being aimed at a fairly basic level and should include a definition of what is meant by a 'sustainable community' so all partners have a shared understanding of what to work towards. One-in-ten (28) believe that sharing examples of good practice would be a very effective learning and development tool, as LSPs can learn from real-life examples of what is working on the ground in areas similar to themselves.

Q35. What learning or development is required by LSPs in order to deliver sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level?	No. (Base = 268)	%
Training needed	59	22
Sustainable communities/planning of sustainable communities	41	15
Shared understanding of what is needed for a community	30	11
Share best practice	28	10
Guidance on LSP functions	23	9

The Centre for Sustainability Development's view:

The Centre recommends that each LSP contains a 'sustainable development champion'. This champion would have an overview of how all the sub-groups and thematic partnership fit together and can ensure matters are being dealt with holistically and with consideration to the local and global aspects of sustainable developments and Sustainable Community Strategies. They feel it will be particularly important for this person in this position to draw together the work of all of the sub-groups into an integrated whole which adds up to delivering sustainable development. However, they are careful to stress that this should be a separate role, and not one that should be taken by the environment champion (if present).

Appendices

Appendix 1

The national respondents to the consultation were:

Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC)
Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors
Association of London Government
Association of Police Authorities
Black Training & Enterprise Group (BTEG)
British Chambers of Commerce
Business in the Community
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)
Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) & CLES Consulting
Centre for Sustainable Development
Chartered Institute of Housing
Citizen's Advice
Commission for Racial Equality
Commission for Rural Communities
Community Development Foundation
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Confederation of Co-operative Housing
English Heritage
English Partnerships
Federation of Small Businesses
Institution of Economic Development
Learning and Skills Council
Legal Services Commission
Link4Sustainability
Living Streets
Local Government Association
National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service
National Association of Local Councils, The
National Community Forum
National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

National Housing Federation

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

Natural England

Networking Action with Voluntary Organisations

The Prince's Trust

Royal Town Planning Institute

Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (Outside London) (SIGOMA)

Sport England

Sustainable Development Commission

Tenant Participation Advisory Service

Urban Forum

Volunteering England

Appendix 2: Respondents by number

Local Strategic Partnerships	247
Borough and district councils	72
County councils	21
Metropolitan councils	11
Unitary councils	11
City councils and London boroughs	6
Parish and town councils	11
Non-profit organisations	78
Charity/church/voluntary organisations	39
All health organisations	15
Local government associations	8
Quangos	15
Individual respondents	12
Others	34
Total	580

Numbers may not fully correspond to the percentages in the table *Profile of Respondents* on page 5 because of rounding.