



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

# *The Beacon Council Scheme*

Where to go and what to see

2005-2006



Excellence in  
Local Government





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# Foreword by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Local Government Association and the Chairman of the Improvement and Development Agency.

The Government, the LGA and IDeA are working together to help local authorities deliver excellent services, provide leadership for their areas, and empower their communities.

There's already been significant improvement in recent years - two thirds of single tier and county councils are now excellent or good. Local authorities have a lot to be proud of, but there are always opportunities to learn and develop further.

Across the country, local authorities are innovating and delivering, and it's important to share the best ideas and experiences from around the country.

Now in its sixth year, the Beacon Council Scheme continues to recognise innovation and effectiveness. We are pleased to welcome this publication which details the achievements, enthusiasm and hard work of the latest round of 48 Beacons.

The authorities profiled in this booklet will spend the majority of this year and next hosting events, creating learning materials and seeking opportunities to share their experiences with other local authorities.

The Beacon Council Scheme itself is fully open to change and innovation. After five full cycles, the Scheme is being made more streamlined, accessible and user-friendly – thanks to the recommendations of the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils, working with the Improvement and Development Agency.

The next round of the Scheme is due to be launched in the summer. A further ten themes have been chosen to give authorities the opportunity to apply for Beacon status and show the excellent standards of work being achieved.

We encourage you to grasp the opportunities for sharing ideas and expertise offered by this Scheme. And we thank the Beacons for being so willing to help and support their colleagues across local government.



John Prescott

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Prescott".



Sir Sandy  
Bruce-Lockhart

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandy Bruce-Lockhart".



Cllr Ian  
Swithenbank

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Swithenbank".

# *The Beacon Council Scheme 2005 – 2006*

48 authorities that submitted 44 applications have been recognised as Beacons for their excellent services in ten new themes. They will hold Beacon status until June 2006, during which time they will share their experiences and best practice with other authorities.

## **How to make the best use of the Beacons**

This booklet contains a brief description of the ten Beacon themes for Round 6 of the Scheme and outlines the successful and innovative practice of each Beacon authority. Further details about the excellent service provision of each Beacon are available on the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Knowledge website [www.idea.gov.uk/beacons](http://www.idea.gov.uk/beacons).

## **The Role of the IDeA**

The Improvement and Development Agency is now responsible for supporting the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils in the assessment process of the Scheme and the co-ordination of a national programme of sharing best practice. They work with the Beacon authorities to develop events and materials designed to share key improvement messages

- including a series of open days and events held from October to December. The IDeA will publish a brochure of the learning activities associated with this round of the Scheme and their Beacons website -

**[www.idea.gov.uk/beacons](http://www.idea.gov.uk/beacons)** - provides up to date information about the wide variety of learning events arranged throughout the Beacon year. Further information can also be obtained from the IDeA Beacon enquiry line on 020 7296 6587.

## **The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils**

The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils provides independent advice to Ministers on the Beacon authorities to be appointed each year. The Panel consists of a Chair and nine core members from a range of backgrounds. In addition, specialist members provide expert advice on each of the themes. The Panel undertook a rigorous assessment of the 210 applications received for Round 6 of the scheme. 85 applications were then shortlisted and following further assessment the Panel recommended 44 of these for Beacon status. Ministers took the final decision.

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# Affordable Housing

Learning Exchange: 16th June 2005, London  
IDeA Consultants: Richard Greening / Sokhjinder Kler

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The *Sustainable Communities Plan* launched by the Deputy Prime Minister on 5 February 2003 set out a programme of action to increase the supply of market and affordable housing. Local authorities have a crucial role to play in tackling the problem and devising solutions through their strategic housing function, their planning powers, utilising the resources over which they have control and through working with others.

The Beacon authorities in this theme have developed a comprehensive and strategic approach to the provision of affordable housing. They have also developed and implemented effective resident consultation and involvement. Overall they support and encourage provision that contributes to the delivery of mixed sustainable communities in urban and rural areas.

**Basingstoke & Deane** uses innovative ways to involve the community and hard to reach groups to inform the Community and Housing Strategies. They have embraced the rapidly changing funding environment by increasing output from private developers, investigating alternative forms of funding, working with HC partners and putting themselves forward to be part of a further 'growth area'. Elected members are very closely involved in the development and implementation of the strategy. This has been strengthened since review to improve involvement of 'back bench' councillors. Various training events are used to support councillor involvement in policy making and their involvement with their constituents.

**East Hampshire** is continually working to improve the delivery of affordable housing. This is based on strong partnership working across the authority and with

external partners. They have a clear vision that is carried through their housing and planning strategies. These, together with their Supplementary Planning Guidance and S106 agreements are based on a good understanding of housing needs. Community engagement is strong and well supported through the LA Community Team and particular steps have been taken to involve the BME community, including gypsies and travellers. The authority has responded proactively and positively to the designation of much of the district as National Park and the increasing emphasis on sub-regional working.

**Greenwich** has an impressive scale and range of new affordable housing schemes being developed. An explicit range of user satisfaction processes are clearly identified and distinct from consultation arrangements. The authority has a clear vision and strategy based on a strong evidence base and good links to regional and sub-regional plans. Greenwich also demonstrates excellent partnership working, both sub-regional and local, with private landlords and developers as well as RSLs and voluntary sector.

**South Hams** changed its approach to housing in 2002. It is clear that this change was driven and informed by evidence provided by the Housing Needs Survey which emphasised to members the negative impact of their pre-2002 approach geared to environmental protection. They have a range of policy initiatives including a leasing scheme, in part targeted on improving second homes on condition that they are leased to the council for 10 years. The council has adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance requiring 50% of affordable housing on windfall sites. Effective user satisfaction practices are also in place, outside of the general consultation exercises.



## *Asset Management*

Learning Exchange: 30th June 2005, Manchester  
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Local authorities' assets are used to deliver many of the services that are most valued by their communities. The type of assets held ranges from those most visible to their communities such as schools, libraries and community centres to less obvious holdings such as farms and investment properties. The drive towards efficiency and economy has accelerated the pace of change in the way that authorities organise service delivery.

Beacons in this theme are at the forefront in using asset management systems and processes and the new flexibilities provided by the prudential system to support delivery of strategic objectives, improve customer services and increase cost efficiency.

**Ashford** has an outstanding approach to asset management which is well evidenced by its achievements across the spectrum of its activities.

They monitor quantitative and qualitative data on levels of satisfaction and have a structured methodology for post-project evaluation. The council commitment to consultation is evidenced in how it went about a number of recent projects, including the new Bowls Centre and a decision to proceed with renovation of its Stour Leisure Centre.

**Cambridgeshire** evidences an outstanding proficient and professional approach to the use of asset management in supporting continuous improvement in the delivery of its services and in its partnership working with other organisations. Whilst Prudential Code freedoms have not yet been used, the council is preparing a strategy to 2016 to meet the challenges of proposals for major growth in the County to add to its existing medium term investment gap analysis.

**Hertfordshire** uses a wide range of solutions in the pursuit of better property procurement and in the provision of the professional services upon which it relies – and the performance of which is diligently measured and monitored. The council's 'comments database,' is an example of an effective way of analysing customer feedback on a regular basis. There is clear evidence that asset management is strongly orientated to achieving the corporate vision for its services, that property is treated as a corporate resource, that asset management has a high priority and that there is a high level of member and cross-organisational involvement

**Leeds** has clearly made a big commitment to using asset management to further its corporate and service objectives. Its work on corporate asset management is sophisticated and well-resourced. Their Asset Management Group and Asset Management Working Group are designed to ensure the council reaches decisions on assets corporately at executive, senior officer and service manager levels. The council's involvement,

as a shareholder, in the LIFT company, its work towards achieving a student village and work with the private sector, through PFI and PPP schemes, all provide good illustrations

**Rotherham's** application is particularly strong in demonstrating integration of asset management with the council's corporate and service strategic framework as evidenced in the involvement of members and senior officers across the Council and in supporting documentation. A Property Board, a sub-group of the Cabinet, has full autonomy on matters of acquisitions and disposals, acting on information provided by the Asset Management group. The council has plans to build on the results of consultation, refine their regular consultation programmes and expand and develop interactive stakeholder links, working jointly with BT through a joint venture company, RBT (Connect) Ltd.



# *Effective Environmental Health*

Learning Exchange: 29th June 2005, Manchester  
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The relationship between environment and health is a complex one. The core elements below are considered to be the foundation of the environmental health service: Food Safety, Healthy & Safety at Work, Housing, Environmental protection and Health Promotion. Over the period of one generation, attitudes to the environment and to the illness or health it may generate have undergone a revolution.

The authorities selected for Beacon status in this theme have clearly demonstrated the positive impact of their environmental health activities on local citizens. They have clear policies, strategies and resources for ensuring that all statutory duties are properly undertaken and have effective mechanisms in place to ensure that new responsibilities are effectively managed and delivered.

**Coventry** demonstrates good performance across the range of environmental health services and

uses local and national data to support the determination of outcomes. The development of comprehensive advisory services, especially in environmental management, is innovative and whilst not directly transferable to other authorities, the lessons learned in achieving an appropriate balance between proactive and reactive operations are.

**Westminster** demonstrates both excellence and innovation whilst achieving good performance in all areas of environmental health. Of particular note were the Category A food project and the Violence in Retail Premises project, both of which demonstrated a sound methodology based on clear problem identification, analysis of existing performance, design of an appropriate intervention, specification of outcomes and full evaluation. This simple yet effective methodology is transferable to any authority irrespective of size.



# Getting Closer to Communities

Learning Exchange: 15th June 2005, London  
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Authorities getting closer to local communities, and enabling communities both to do more amongst themselves and to help to shape public services, are at the heart of the debate about how to strengthen communities, build civil renewal, reform public services, regenerate disadvantaged areas and invigorate local governance. A dynamic relationship between authorities and communities requires that, on the one hand, authorities deliver services in an effective and integrated way at a local level, and on the other, that they support the development of the communities' own role.

The Beacon authorities for this theme have displayed a creative interaction between themselves and their communities including a significant recognition of the importance of, and relationship with, the local voluntary and community sector. They have a strategy for invigorating communities' efforts to add their own characteristic forms of productivity and value to local society and also have widely

devolved structures and participatory opportunities.

**Blyth Valley** outlined, in the mid 1990s, a new direction to become a 'community based council'. This new approach is based on wide support for initiatives taken by local people to solve their own problems. This has entailed the adoption of a systematic approach to understanding and bringing about complex community change. The authority's Young Persons Survey is an example of action in response to its recognition of the need to ensure that it was satisfactorily recording, and acting on, the needs of all groups in its communities

**Croydon's** approach to getting closer to communities places a high value on a well organised and extensively supported voluntary and community sector (VCS). The VCS in turn places a high value on building up the smaller, more resident-based groups and facilitating their involvement in neighbourhood partnerships. There is clear Member as well as

officer commitment, with a lead cabinet member for equalities and partnerships, and support for the VCS is widely spread across departments, with around £10m of contract and grant aid money going to the sector aside from all external sources. In addition, the VCS, led by a very creative lead umbrella group, brings in a further £2.5m from external sources. A VCS BME forum facilitates the involvement of minority communities in all aspects of development and communication.

**Haringey's** success in getting closer to its communities in the last three to four years is manifest in a climate of creative cooperation between council, community and other partners. 193 languages and dialects are spoken – possibly the single most diverse borough in Britain, as well as the 13th most deprived district. A variety of initiatives are specifically directed to the transitory population, for example a forum for people in temporary accommodation, investment in ground-level community development (door-knocking and very local resident contact), and much work with communities of interest. The council draws on a pool of 100 language interpreters. In a one-stop-shop in a very

diverse neighbourhood, up to 15 languages are on tap for people dropping in. A Landlords' Forum is used to negotiate with landlords to make their properties available on secure three to four year lets rather than bed and breakfast use.

**South Somerset** displays an impressive momentum in getting closer to communities. It is successfully supporting a wide variety of local projects which involve and benefit residents, and there is a sense of good organisation and positive energy. A small establishment of District community development staff maintains a network which has drawn in other front-line staff from within the district, other public sector partners in the district and from other districts in the county. A number of staff in other disciplines have also been trained as 'interact facilitators', to facilitate participative community meetings. The District has had great success in drawing in funding for community involvement projects from external schemes: five towns had Market and Coastal Towns Initiatives and 22 parishes were participating in Countryside Agency initiatives

**Tameside's** approach to getting closer to communities displays a strong sense of innovation built on solid roots, and integration between

different contributing elements  
There is evidence of successful partnership working not only at the formal decision-making level but in ground-level co-operation between street representatives who were active in the alleygating and resident movement and police and street wardens. The council uses arts and cultural policy to promote interfaith celebration and community cohesion. The focus on interfaith activity has highlighted, in a borough with a relatively small BME population, how effective this can be as a way to value diversity. The Town Hall now houses a museum presenting a long perspective on the long history of the area and explaining the current functioning of the Council, and a 'trace your family roots' service is available.

**Tower Hamlets** has no single natural focal point, It is a huge chunk of city between two affluent areas, with tremendous diversity and rate of change. There have been major achievements in getting closer to the community in a locality which presents enormous challenge. Tower Hamlets has a long tradition of citizenship innovation. The working population, currently about 100,000 is expected to go up to 500,000 in the next few

years – with a probable gentrification effect. The existing population is extremely culturally diverse and dynamic after a series of waves of migration. The community will become increasingly multi-cultural: the Tower Hamlets experience is of value as a 'laboratory' of globalisation

**Wiltshire** made a corporate decision in 1998 to establish a closer relationship with its local communities and to play a more dynamic role in their development. The county determined to be the main driver on community involvement despite its geographical spread, and has spread this ethos through its local employees such as teachers, community librarians and staff appointed to support community involvement. There is a cross-department 'listening to communities' group, and the lifelong education service takes a particularly strong role. The council established community areas, based on natural communities and historical research, mostly clustered around market towns, and set in motion a community strategy for each area. Responding to priorities arising from widespread consultation the community strategy as a whole is called 'A county fit for children', to emphasise the orientation to the future.



# Healthy Communities

Learning Exchange: 28th June 2005, Manchester  
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A major challenge is to break the cycle by which poor health is passed down from one generation to the next. To increase the number of people from disadvantaged groups and areas adopting healthier lifestyles; and to provide a range of key services relative to need, in order to meet individuals' needs (including needs arising from culture, religion, race and language). In July 2003, the Government set out the strategy to meet this challenge in *Tackling Health Inequalities: A Programme for Action*. Local authorities have a vital role to play in supporting the Government's strategy.

The four authorities selected for Beacon status have accepted this role and are leading and implementing a range of activity to promote healthier communities and reduce inequalities in health. They are also providing high profile community leadership for improving the health outcomes of their area and are working in close partnership with primary care trusts, other local partners and communities.

**Cannock Chase** is committed to improving the health of their local communities, eager to demonstrate imaginative approaches and to providing good health. It is an excellent example of district council approach to health improvement. The district council and the PCT have a strong and practical approach to partnership working. There is a jointly appointed Director of Public Health and a Director of Partnerships. The chief executive of the PCT chairs the LSP. The council has found innovative ways to create capacity among its officers to support work on health improvement. A range of innovative practices and programmes were demonstrated ranging from projects on the ground, such as GP referral for exercise, as well as changes to corporate processes and systems, such as using a policy led budgetary system, which prioritises health.

**Gateshead** has an excellent

reputation as an authority committed to tackling health inequalities through community based strategy and partnership. It is making good progress in its health inequality/improving health targets. People in Gateshead are living longer and healthier lives. The council is already a 'Promoting Healthier Communities Shared Priority Pathfinder' and has expressed an interest in becoming a 'Communities for Health' pilot. There is clearly member commitment and leadership on health issues e.g. the council has a total smoking ban across all its premises, including licensed ones which has resulted in lost revenues.

**Manchester** has the lowest life expectancy of a Local Authority area in England. It has been making some progress against national targets to improve health, driven in part by the LPSA. It is a 'Shared Priority Pathfinder', helping to identify how local authorities can make a contribution to reducing health inequalities. The council is undoubtedly committed to partnership working to improve health and established in 2002 a Joint Health Unit with its PCTs which has a combined budget of over £350k made up of contributions from the city councils

departments and the four PCTs. It has placed Health Improvement as a corporate priority over two decades. This Unit has been the engine of real public health capacity and action. It has a series of programmes (including a regeneration work-stream handling regeneration monies of up to £5m) and has become a model of effective joined up action on a cross-cutting issue which is being copied for other key corporate policy areas within the council.

**Stockton on Tees** has already won a number of awards and national recognition for its imaginative approaches to partnership and community involvement. It is also a pilot for Local Area Agreements and has expressed interest in being Communities for Health pilot. They have a particularly good and innovative approach to user engagement by taking local people round on a bus with services providers to look at key issues in their neighbourhood and to plan for real. Local people are also being used as community health champions to raise awareness and help develop projects and programmes. Fifteen local action plans have been developed around meaningful neighbourhoods. The council has also developed local community champions for health.

*Every Child Matters* published in



## *Integrated Children's Services*

Learning Exchange: 14th July 2005, Manchester  
IDeA Consultant: Vicky Brown  
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September 2003, the Next Steps document published in March 2004 and *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* published in December 2004 laid out the Government's vision for the integration of children's services. The Children Act 2004 creates the statutory basis for this vision to be made reality. We expect that by 2008 all Local Authorities will have a Director of Children's Services, a Lead Council Member responsible for Children's Services, and a Children's Trust to secure more integrated front-line delivery, processes, strategy and governance, leading to improvements across a range of clearly defined outcomes.

This is a long term and ambitious programme, but the Beacons for Integrated Children's Services have demonstrated that they are having a clear positive impact on the life chances of children and young people, with less need for social services intervention, reduced crime, better child health

and improved educational attainment. They also have a clear commitment at strategic and operational levels to working closely with partners including their own schools, NHS organisations, the voluntary and community sector, and to delivering integrated services for children, young people and families. This is a difficult task, requiring leadership and the communication of a vision as well as detailed needs analysis and management and organisational abilities. The Beacons have shown themselves to be up to the task.

**Essex** was very early in appointing a Deputy Chief Executive (Learning and Social Care) whose role appears to be Children's Act compliant. It has 40 partners with a duty to cooperate under the Children's Act and has, therefore, done well to create the quality of partnership working which has supported its local CYPSPs and the Children's Trust. The council has ensured commitment across

the agencies to joint working at both the county wide and local levels. Essex's significant success has been to move the agenda as far as it has in such a large and complex authority. There are many exciting projects having an impact on the lives of young people and their families.

**Knowsley's** children's services agencies are well ahead of most other authorities in implementing key changes in structures and practice which have already begun to transform children's services.

The authority was able to demonstrate evidence of improving outcomes for children and families. The vision is driven by extensive consultation in which young people in Knowsley said they wanted a "Dream Team" which would be "working for a brighter life for young people".

These slogans are now used to promote integrated working. The active role of schools in the partnerships, particularly in the area partnerships, was impressive, as was the detail and level of analysis of need and the problem-solving approach to issues.

Knowsley also has an integrated PCT and Social Services which is led by a joint director.

**Telford & Wrekin's** children's

services agencies have begun to implement key changes in structures and practice which have already started to transform children's services. The council has developed multi-agency work evidenced in Information Sharing and Assessment [ISA] and Team Around the Child [TAC], its joint commissioning practice, the early years work, including particularly the Newlands Children's Centre and Primary School Campus, and the maturity of its partnership relationships. The authority demonstrated early evidence of improved outcomes for children and families, and an ability to learn from their experience. They are already experienced in sharing and disseminating their learning and are motivated to making a strong contribution to the Beacon programme.

**West Sussex's** Joint Access Team [JAT] development would be particularly interesting to other authorities as an operational and developing means of preventative multi-agency working at a local level. It reflects strong partnership working at ground level and there has been strong strategic leadership and multi-agency commitment to make the pilots work in practice. It is backed up by information-sharing systems and

impressive cultural change programmes with staff. The authority gave several examples of ways in which practice and outcomes had changed to the benefit of the child and family. The strong sign-up from maintained schools is encouraging, as is the Practitioners' Toolkit and the information-sharing IT systems and protocol. The groundwork to establish the "Full Service Hub" in Littlehampton has been laid – another development which will be of considerable interest to others because it will create timely access and local provision.



## *Promoting Racial Equality*

Learning Exchange: 14th June 2005, London  
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Britain has a long tradition of successful migration and integration that has brought, and continues to bring, real economic and social benefits. Black and minority ethnic communities make up 9% of the population in England and whilst it is true that many of our cities have higher proportions, all local authority areas have a minority ethnic population. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a positive duty on public authorities to actively promote race equality and good relations between different ethnic groups. The RR (A) A is the most progressive anti-discrimination legislation in Europe.

The authorities selected for Beacon status have demonstrated that they have a clear overarching vision of race equality and good relations between different racial and faith communities. They have successful multi-agency partnerships that properly reflect the communities that they serve and have in place monitoring and

evaluation mechanisms to ensure that they are constantly learning and refining their strategy.

**Bristol** has identified and implemented plans to tackle specific issues such as under-representation, educational attainment equalities gaps and racial harassment, and has mainstreamed many of its actions. The council provides specific services for minority communities such as travellers and refugees and ensures that these communities are consulted on strategies, plans and services. The scope and application of the council's information management systems for reporting racial crimes is particularly impressive. The council has promoted dialogue, understanding and respect within and between its service users and communities through a range of heavily supported cultural events, such as Black History Month, Refugee Week, and Holocaust Memorial Day.

**Gravesham** shows evidence of improved well-being and community relations within and between the District's BME communities, and of a commitment to reflecting racial equality in the council's policies and services. The council has implemented a policy screening procedure to assess the impact of its policies on race equality, with tangible results. The community cohesion work is well publicised and made real by events such as the Big Day Out, which enjoyed tremendous success during the Summer. A range of projects are delivering improved outcomes for the Sikh, Muslim and other minority communities. There appears to be an energy and commitment to racial equality, which has been crystallised by cultural celebrations and good community relations.

**Tower Hamlets** workforce representation, involvement in training and % of top earners from BME backgrounds continue to rise to meet high aspirations. The council uses its popular free weekly newspaper to communicate and consult with the people of Tower Hamlets, and promotes many of its services in the paper. It has established important partnerships with faith

communities including the East London Mosque and Racial Harassment Inter Agency Forum. The Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum is particularly productive, and has undertaken activities to spread understanding of the faiths and to encourage community cohesion through interfaith work. Key achievements include the creation of the new London Muslim Centre, and work within schools to improve educational attainment, build community cohesion, deal with racism and increase school attendance. The council is working closely with Mosques on several of these issues. As a result, Tower Hamlets is the fourth most improved LEA for primary attendance.



## *Supporting Carers*

Learning Exchange: 13th July 2005, Manchester  
IDeA Consultant: Tom Martin-Herbert  
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The 2001 Census shows that of the 5.2 million people providing informal care in England and Wales, just over 1 million provide over 50 hours of care per week. This is a large number of people providing significant levels of care and enabling people to live longer in the community, which is what over three quarters of people say they want.

Beacons in this theme have a strategic approach to developing services that reflect local carer and national priorities. They are able to demonstrate that their services promote independence and choice for carers and those that they care for. They are also working in partnership with a range of local statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations to ensure that services are comprehensive, coordinated and avoid duplication.

**Hertfordshire's** Carers Services have been developing over the last 11 years. Hertfordshire provides

an extremely well organised, sophisticated and dynamic approach to its services based on a belief in a multi-agency approach. The depth and variety of projects and services, provided by many departments within the Council, the NHS and the voluntary sector gives many opportunities for finding and supporting carers. Highlights include: 'Carewise' which is the council's own very flexible working policy; it's stratified approach to obtaining satisfaction levels including forums such as the "Speakeasy" sessions for consulting with young carers, questionnaires, leaflets, local and county events and facilitated events and its strong, well funded and sustainable partnership arrangements with the NHS and the voluntary sector.

**Rochdale's** carers service has been created largely in the last 3 years. The Chief Executive, Councillors and the MP in Rochdale all demonstrated their commitment to the carers movement and this is verified in agreement to release power from the council into the hands of the carers themselves as the service matures. Rochdale is a remarkable example of positive development in a short period - their service is supporting larger numbers of carers than many longer established services and does so in a very socially inclusive way. Highlights include: BEM work. It provides culturally/language sensitive services and also works inclusively. There are many cross-cultural events for carers to enjoy. Such 'Ready Steady Cook' evenings and parties to celebrate Eid, Christmas and Diwali. The Carers Resource is a carers centre currently controlled by the Council but being moved into being a carer run and controlled Social Enterprise running training for employment and personal development. It also has a raft of counselling, advocacy and social support services, special groups/services for male carers and BEM carers but also many mixed social events, outreach

beyond the town centre, and benefits advice. Partnership working with the NHS and voluntary sector is very positive. There are strong links with education for young carers and a Families Partnership of agencies supporting parent carers.

**Sefton's** carer service is over 10 years old. Sefton provides an astonishing range of services in innovative ways which is a remarkable achievement for a small authority. Sefton's services have been shaped from inception by a Carers Forum regularly refreshed and updated, which works through the structure of the Carers Compass (Kings Fund) to ensure that services provided are what carers want. The Multi Agency Carers Strategy group which is central to the success in Sefton extends much further than in many other places. This has allowed the Sefton carers' services to reach and support carers through many more avenues than just health, social services and housing, leisure, the courts, shops and the private sector are all involved. Highlights include: The Carers Emergency Respite Team (CERT) which is a unique service offering instant response for when a carer faces an emergency which would

prevent them from being able to continue caring. Sefton is the only area investigating telematics as a means of allowing carers to juggle their other responsibilities with their caring role. Sefton are also looking at investing in major Social Enterprises such as a hotel for the training of carers who want to get into employment whilst producing an extended respite and pampering environment for carers. Sefton believes in involving outside agencies, including the voluntary sector, as equal partners and have invested heavily in the infrastructure which allows them to operate from a very sound and stable base.

**Sunderland's** carer services are over 10 years old. It provides a two-pronged approach to services: 'People First' - one-stop shops where there is open door access to services geographically spread throughout the council and the Modernisation and Reform Groups (MARGs) which look at all aspects of Social and Health Services. These are partnership led with strong inputs from carers - there is a specific MARG on user and carer involvement. These methods combined with a strong commitment to carers create a solid raft of high quality services. Sunderland has a strong

preventative programme which means that carers can readily access help well before being eligible for assessments under the Act. Highlights include: Sunderland's Carers in Employment scheme is one of the leads for the European ACE programme. In an area of high unemployment this is of particular importance. The Young Carers programme is particularly strong in linking in the voluntary sector, education department workers and social services in the seamless support of the child in its learning and social role. Sunderland demonstrated their understanding that caring has an impact on all parts of a carer's life by showing that transport, leisure, housing and education were as involved as employers, social services and health in being carer aware. There are Carers Champions throughout.



## *Supporting New Businesses*

Learning Exchange: 12th July 2005, Manchester

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Start-up businesses are an important contributor to productivity growth and to a dynamic and competitive economy. They help create jobs and are a source of innovation, competition and new ideas. 'Encouraging a Dynamic Start-up market' is one of the seven strategic themes for increasing UK productivity in the Government's Action plan for helping small businesses ([www.sbs.gov.uk](http://www.sbs.gov.uk)). Encouraging more people to think about starting a business or to become self-employed will increase the levels of entrepreneurial activity.

Authorities selected for Beacon status in this theme have showed that their strategies are having a positive impact on problems identified locally and that there is an increase in the numbers of people starting a business within all community groups. They also have a demonstrable commitment at strategic and operational levels – linked to and supportive of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES)

of their Regional Development Agency – which encourages and helps more people to start businesses, or to become self-employed.

**Derwentside** is a well-run rural council who are making things happen. The EMERGE programme offers cash incentives and a complete support package to members of the local community who wish to start a business. The council provides advice, mentoring, and finance to qualifying businesses. Seventy five per cent of businesses are created by residents in the most deprived wards of Derwentside. There is an interesting use of both a citizen's panel and the tenants' compact panel to ascertain views on specific and local issues.

Derwentside uses the Economic Development Forum as its main driver for change so that plans are reviewed and monitored and reflect changing market and community changes.

**East Riding** has a well-run new business operation and partnership. There are a significant number of examples of good practice within this council, which could be shared across the UK but particularly with rural councils and hard to reach communities. These include the provision of strategically placed Business Centres, which provide access to high quality business support and advice. There are significant projects for commendation such as Women Returners Aspirations, 50+ programme, Phoenix Development Fund, Opportunity knocks, Procurement 123, and the Intermediate Labour Market. The council has been recognised for its business services work in achieving high standards by achieving the Customer First accreditation.

**Medway** are a committed council who have strategy, vision, capability and capacity to deliver. The Medway Enterprise Gateway (MEG) enables the Council to interact with the business community, aspirant entrepreneurs and new and growing businesses. Through its Managed Workspace and Wired Medway – e-business support – projects it offers specialist one-to-one advice, hot desks with computers and training

courses. Medway is developing its own enterprise students by building it into the school curriculum and developing links with the University of Greenwich.

**Rotherham** is a council that has a strategic commitment to delivering its entrepreneurial vision. Its role is to deliver support to meet local needs without duplication, and it has worked hard to streamline support to start-up and small businesses. It actively fosters the growth of start-up and small businesses by providing business incubators, business support and managed office/workspace facilities. The Council currently operates two Business Centres, which offer full business support and incubation services at easy in/easy out terms. It also works under the auspices of the Rotherham Enterprise Network to encourage and develop a culture of entrepreneurship. It has worked in partnership to support entrepreneurship in local schools and businesses



## *Sustainable Energy*

Learning Exchange: 17th June 2005, London  
IDeA Consultant: Emma Buxbaum  
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The Government's Energy White Paper commits the UK to putting itself on a path towards delivering 60% reductions in CO2 emissions by 2050, with 'real progress' by 2020. This builds on the Government's existing domestic goal to move towards a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions on 1990 levels by 2010, and its target, under the Kyoto Protocol, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12.

Beacons in this theme have taken a strategic overview of the opportunities for promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy and other low carbon technologies in their local community or economy. They have also defined objectives for their local area and have developed strategic partnerships (with energy generators, supply companies, network operators, R&D centres, community groups, Non Government Organisation (NGO) and other public sector bodies) to achieve them.

**Cornwall with Caradon, Carrick, Isles of Scilly, Kerrier, North Cornwall, Penwith, and Restormel** has an ambitious and far-reaching strategy for sustainable energy development which was published by the Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership (CSEP) in July 2004 ('Action Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow'). This approach could well serve as a core model for other counties to adopt and adapt. The CSEP's achievements have been widely recognised as path breaking. There is very strong and well documented evidence of sustained local and regional (and emerging EU) partnership working, particularly via CSEP's task groups in the public health, business, renewable energy and education fields, and with energy suppliers. All recent PFI's achieve excellent BREEAM standard, demonstrating the focus is on general higher standards rather than showcase exemplar projects.

**High Peak** was EMAS accredited in 2001, retaining its accreditation since then. Within its EMAS partnership framework, the council takes responsibility for delivering its climate change, fuel poverty, energy efficiency, energy costs and air quality objectives. There is real evidence of sustained efforts to secure effective and 'joined up' partnership activity, such as the Affordable Warmth steering group (including the PCT, social services and the EEAC); a business transport project steering group; a cross-service EMAS officer group; the appointment of a voluntary sector co-ordinator; and active engagement in the regional energy partnership comprising nine LAs. Planning and development guidance is used to encourage adoption of sustainable energy principles in residential developments.

**Leicester's** first sustainable energy action plan was published in 1990, when the council set itself a very ambitious 50% reduction target for CO2 emissions by 2025. It also set a 20% target for renewable energy by 2020. Since 1990 it can genuinely claim to have been at the forefront of much LA activity on sustainable energy issues. There is much evidence of innovative thinking; the arrangements being

made to pilot the extension of metering and monitoring; and the Braunston project where electricity 'export' receipts from households with PV installations benefit the community by being recycled into energy efficiency measures elsewhere. The city has gained significant experience in the deployment of renewable energy technologies, including a solar rental scheme, and has secured significant external funding. It is currently exploring the ESCO approach.

**Lewisham** has long experience in this field and has developed a comprehensive energy policy, and strategies for affordable warmth, environmentally responsible procurement and climate change. Amongst the key features of the affordable warmth strategy are the 9,000 central heating systems already installed; and over 10,000 cavity wall insulation jobs undertaken or firmly planned. The council has purchased all of its electricity from green sources since 2000. Key outcomes include energy purchasing (green electricity, and procurement savings from regular re-tendering of all energy contracts); large-scale domestic energy efficiency and fuel poverty programmes; very extensive advice provision activity;

success in securing large EEC/EESoP funding from energy suppliers; energy auditing surveys and use of remote energy management controllers; and increasing use of cleaner vehicles.

**Nottinghamshire** has a long-established track record in sustainable energy and has received several national energy awards. It has reduced CO2 emissions from council buildings by 25% in the past 4 years building on earlier reductions. It is particularly active in local and regional networks and partnerships. The council has a good record of project delivery across a very broad field - such as building energy management, energy efficiency, green electricity, CHP, wood-fuelled boilers, transport and fleet management, and energy recovery from waste. Considerable 'outreach' activity occurs via home energy surveys, sustainable energy publications, and via local advice centres. A good performance management framework, and a set of indicators to track performance are also in place.

**Shropshire** has developed its approach to sustainable energy since 1995. The impressive Marches Energy Agency (MEA), while operating like an EST-

sponsored Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, is independent and funded mainly through specific project management activity. This is perhaps unique and was a conscious decision by SCC and MEA. Much attention is given to transport-related issues including use of cleaner vehicles, reductions in staff travel, car sharing, greater use of bus services (or rural/parish car solutions where rural bus services prove uneconomical), cycling and walking and improving the standard of private sector vehicles (i.e. taxi fleets) utilised by the council in their service provision by 'culling' older vehicles. Sustainable energy issues have been introduced into the school curriculum in imaginative ways.

**Woking** has a sustained and committed track record, and a pioneering approach on a very broad front. The original Energy Efficiency Policy is now embodied in a climate change strategy, covering power, heat, water, waste disposal, and transport. The council has accumulated extensive experience with CHP/DH, fuel cell CHP, energy efficiency, solar PV, ground source heat pumps, energy services, and procurement. It operates a private wire distributed generation system unique in the

UK and perhaps world. 64 sites now have DH or sustainable energy installations. The save-to-spend approach is used extensively to maintain impressive momentum. Woking's underlying philosophy is based not on 'rocket science', but rather on many accumulated, targeted and measured small steps since 1990.









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