



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

*Evaluation of Local Strategic
Partnerships
Interim Report*

August 2005

Department for
Transport



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships Interim Report

August 2005

LGC Warwick
CRC West of England
OPM

EIUA Liverpool John Moores

Department for
Transport

Department for Transport
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Telephone 020 7944 4400
Web site www.odpm.gov.uk

© Queen's Printer and Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office 2005

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.

For any other use of this material, please write to HMSO Licensing, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ Fax: 01603 723000 or e-mail: licensing@bmsso.gov.uk.

Further copies of this publication are available from:

ODPM Publications
PO Box 236
Wetherby
West Yorkshire
LS23 7NB
Tel: 0870 1226 236
Fax: 0870 1226 237
Textphone: 0870 1207 405
E-mail: odpm@twoten.press.net
or online via the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's web site.

August 2005

Product Code 05LGFG03292/6

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	5
PART 1	
Introduction	20
Local Strategic Partnerships	20
The National Evaluation	21
A Theory of Change approach	25
PART 2	
Findings	30
Introduction – Structure of Part 2	30
1 Setting up the LSP	32
1.1 Context	32
1.2 LSP structures	37
1.3 LSP membership	40
1.4 Staffing and financial resources	42
1.5 Governance arrangements	43
1.6 Leadership	44
1.7 Partner engagement	45
1.8 Local government	51
1.9 Conclusion – Organisational arrangements and the capacity of LSPs	53
Implications for Policy and Practice	54
2 Developing Strategy	56
2.1 Introduction	56
2.2 Strategy Planning Processes	57
2.3 Challenges in developing Community Strategies	59
2.4 Developing the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	62
2.5 Conclusion: LSPs and Strategic Planning	73
Implications for Policy and Practice	75

3	Action, Implementation and Delivery	76
3.1	Introduction	76
3.2	Strategic planning and functional delivery	78
3.3	Two-tier relationships	84
3.4	Performance management	87
3.5	The realignment and reshaping of main programmes	90
3.6	Conclusions	108
	Implications for Policy and Practice	109
4	Adding Value towards outcomes	111
4.1	What is added value?	111
4.2	Why assess added value?	112
4.3	Proportionate value	112
4.4	Assessing added value – alternative approaches	113
4.5	What value are LSPs adding?	113
4.6	Conclusions	118
	Implications for Policy and Practice	119
5	Conclusion	120
PART 3		
	Further work to be undertaken	121
APPENDICES		
	Appendix 1 – Related research outputs	123
	Appendix 2 – List of abbreviations	124
	Appendix 3 – Transport Planning and Accessibility	126

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are a major innovation in the pattern of local governance in England. Initial guidance on the establishment of LSPs was issued by government in early 2001 and over the last three years LSPs have been established in the vast majority of English local authority areas. They bring together public, private, voluntary and community interests to provide a strategic framework within which partners can work together more effectively to secure the economic, environmental and social well being of the area and those who live and work there. LSPs have oversight of the preparation and implementation of Community Strategies and (in neighbourhood renewal fund areas) of Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies, but have wide discretion about how to organise themselves, how to arrange their business, and on what issues to concentrate.
- 1.2 The first stage of a national evaluation of LSPs, jointly commissioned in March 2002 by three ODPM research divisions (LRGRU, NRU and RAE) and the Department for Transport (DfT), is being undertaken by the Universities of Warwick, Liverpool John Moores, West of England and the Office for Public Management.
- 1.3 This report draws on a number of strands of research work undertaken within the first stage of the evaluation:
 - A survey in summer 2002 of all LSPs
 - Nine longitudinal case studies of differing LSPs, one in each region
 - Five Action Learning sets on Performance management, Governance, Community engagement, Strategic planning, and Mainstreaming / aligning resources
 - Four 'call down' studies requested by the commissioning departments during the course of the research programme on Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies; Mapping approaches to integrating performance indicators; The role of public sector bodies in LSPs (initial report); and a workshop on mainstreaming
- 1.4 Overall the research has been able to draw on evidence from a majority of all LSPs.
- 1.5 The findings reported here reflect only these first stages of the evaluation. This in turn reflects the fact that LSPs are themselves relatively recent institutions which are still in a developmental phase. Methodologically the evaluation has been informed by a 'theory of change' approach which involves identifying the key theoretical

propositions which appear to underlie the establishment and operation of LSPs, and the research questions which derive from them.

1.6 The main chapters of the report deal with:

- Setting up the LSP - organisational arrangements and capacity
- Developing strategy
- Action, implementation and delivery
- Adding value towards outcomes

1.7 The following sections summarise each of the chapters of the main report, highlighting:

- The issues and research questions discussed.
- Main findings.
- The implications for policy and practice for LSPs and for government.

SETTING UP THE LSP

Issues and research questions

2.1 This chapter deals with:

- The national, regional and local contexts within which LSPs have developed and the pre-existing stock of experience and capacity that are brought to partnership working.
- The organisational arrangements which LSPs have made, including issues of membership; arrangements for the Board, theme and task groups etc; staffing; financial resources.
- The ‘soft systems’ and processes through which LSPs operate – approaches to partnership governance; leadership; accountability; performance management etc.

2.2 Key research questions are:

- How important is context – national and local – in influencing the direction and progress of an individual LSP?
- How inclusive and effective are the different organisational arrangements and systems developed by LSPs?

- How far do these provide LSPs with the capacity (strategic, operational, for learning) to address their core purposes (improved services, better local governance), including their capacity to deliver neighbourhood renewal?

Findings

- 2.3 The evaluation shows that **national, regional and local contexts** matter. Most LSPs have responded positively to the main **national drivers** - Community Strategies and - in the NRF areas – LNRSS) In addition a range of national policies – in health, crime and disorder, education, children, transport, for example, set the context in a number of specific areas of work. Nevertheless, the extent to which some elements of national policy constrain LSP discretion remains unclear. In addition **regionalism** provides an increasingly visible and significant context, although as yet not one which LSPs can accurately predict nor to which they know how to respond. **Local contexts** – local socio-economic conditions, local politics, local histories of joint working – are also highly influential in determining both the starting capacities and experience of the LSP and the trajectory and direction of change of LSP development.
- 2.4 The balance in **government guidance** between prescription on the one hand and freedom for local initiative and diversity on the other has, in general, been seen by LSPs as positive. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable distance to travel for many LSPs before they can be seen as firmly established and fit for purpose institutions. While in some cases the LSP is now taken for granted, there are also situations where its added value is in doubt.
- 2.5 Most LSPs have drawn on some combination of a number of ‘building blocks’ in setting up an **operational structure**: a main Board, a larger Forum, an executive, theme and task groups, neighbourhood and community forums. Nevertheless there remains in many areas the lack of a systematic mapping of inter-organisational relationships and of the interdependencies between the LSP and other partnership structures. These LSP structures engage widely varying numbers of members. There is a tension between being inclusive and fully representative while remaining strategic and focused, and partnerships are moving in different directions in an attempt to resolve this tension, some enlarging their membership to be more inclusive, others reducing it to become more streamlined.
- 2.6 The level of **staff support** for LSPs is clearly changing as they move from a focus on vision and strategy to increasing concerns with action and delivery. All the case study LSPs have a manager, executive or co-ordinator, sometimes appointed, sometimes seconded (generally from the local authority), and sometimes with additional duties beyond support to the LSP. In the best-resourced cases, the manager also has a small staff team. These arrangements vary, and there are differing views about what would constitute adequate staffing for an LSP, or whether this should be a dedicated resource. One view would seem to be that LSPs need relatively limited dedicated staff, as theirs is a ‘steering not rowing’ role. It remains to be seen whether this is a workable model, or whether LSPs need more substantial dedicated staffing, even to fulfil a non-delivery role effectively. As well as the numbers of staff available to an LSP, there are related issues about the range of expertise needed by LSP staff. Some LSP staff have to work on equal terms with senior personnel from partners, and need the authority and experience to be able to

promote inter-agency working. Among other necessary areas of expertise are strategic planning; project and performance management and ‘driving’ delivery, and evaluation. The evaluation suggests that the level of LSP staffing and resourcing, and how it is provided, is an issue which needs urgent consideration. This issue might, for example, be addressed through the GO-delivered Skills and Knowledge programme. But if LSPs are not adequately staffed and resourced, the danger is that they will be unable to deliver on their – and government’s – strategies and priorities.

- 2.7 There is a need to deepen and extend the **engagement** in the LSP of numerous partners, including (but not only) the **community and voluntary sector**, and to address issues of legitimacy and representation, although not all members of LSPs need be regarded as ‘representatives’.
- 2.8 The degree to which LSPs have succeeded in engaging the voluntary and community sector varies considerably, depending on the nature and organisation of the sector in the locality and the history of past relationships, as well as the availability of resources to support engagement, especially the CEF. Many non-NRF LSPs would welcome such capacity building resources.
- 2.9 The extent of engagement of **public sector bodies** in LSPs is mixed, and is often perceived to be constrained by the tension for public sector partners between centrally-driven priorities and local considerations. The outcomes from the work being undertaken in the Innovation Forum on this issue are likely to be of importance in this respect. There remains uncertainty about the ways in which central departments and/or their agencies are expected to relate to LSPs, and what scope for local discretion exists within their plans, programmes and resource mechanisms. This can be an important impediment to collective action on cross-cutting issues and to the achievement of local priorities.
- 2.10 The attitude of the **local authority** is probably the most important local factor in the success of the LSP, and the development of a community leadership role is one of the most important contributors to a successful LSP. A number of factors can be identified which are associated with positive and less positive local government engagement. In particular, aligning the LSP positively with councillors’ roles and responsibilities is often a difficult issue but one which goes to the heart of issues of legitimacy and democracy in local governance.
- 2.11 The variety and complexity of the many partnership arrangements, the absence of protocols, uncertainty amongst partners about roles, and the challenge of leadership in a context of partnership working all contribute to the fact that appropriate styles of **governance** for many LSPs are still in a formative stage. There are different approaches to governance available to LSPs which will be more or less suitable depending on the local context.
- 2.12 Everywhere, in both NRF and non-NRF areas, LSPs face a **tension between process and outcomes** – between the energy and resources which they put into ‘process’ issues, and the pressures on them – mostly but not only from government – to ‘deliver’. LSPs clearly take time to ‘build’ and have to go through stages of ‘forming’ and partnership building in order to reach the stability which enables them to act. Without allowing the time necessary to sort out effective process,

partnerships may encounter difficulties which translate into delivery problems. Inside the LSP partners talk of understanding, trust and social capital as mechanisms for ensuring mutual accountability but issues of transparency and accountability remain, revolving around the extent to which, and the means by which, the LSP wishes to make its business open. Inclusive membership does not necessarily assure transparency.

- 2.13 Overall, most LSPs are making good progress in setting up effective and inclusive organisational structures and processes, and developing their strategic and operational capacity, although there is considerable variation in the extent of progress made (both between NRF and non-NRF areas, and within each of these groups). Where the LSP builds on pre-existing partnership arrangements progress has generally been more assured. The processes involved in setting up an effective and inclusive LSP have been assisted by the balance between prescription and freedom for local initiative and diversity in government guidance. As noted above, other key ‘success factors’ include a positive and proactive stance on the part of the local authority, and the capacity of the support team. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable distance to travel for many LSPs before they can be seen as firmly established and fit for purpose institutions.

SETTING UP THE LSP: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Implications for LSPs

Membership and Structures

- LSPs should keep under review the extent to which their membership is ‘fit for purpose’ in terms of knowledge, skills, and commitment.
- Consideration should be given to the level (forum, board, executive group, theme group, task force) at which partner resources can best be exploited.
- There may be ‘missing partners’ who need to be involved, and others who could be more actively engaged with LSP activity.
- Decisions on structures and membership should be linked to decisions on purpose and function, since different sorts of LSPs need different sorts of membership and structure.
- LSPs may find it helpful to produce a clear ‘interorganisational map’ which shows the relationships and linkages between the many arrangements for joint working in and around the LSP itself.
- Protocols should be established setting out the procedures for handling issues which involve more than one partnership within the LSP ‘family’.

Governance

- LSPs should consider whether their governance arrangements are appropriate in the light of the mode of operation of the LSP.

- In the interests of transparency and accountability, LSPs should set out clearly their proposed arrangements for consultation, communication and reporting, and should make explicit the relationship between these arrangements and the accountability mechanisms of partner organisations.
- Attention should be given – nationally and locally - to the relationship of the LSP to the democratic accountability of the local authority, and in particular to the role of those councillors who may have little knowledge or ownership of the LSP's activities.

Resources and Support

- Partners should consider whether the LSP has sufficient resources and support, including staffing resources with the necessary skills and expertise, to cope with the diverse and challenging tasks undertaken by an LSP staff team.

Implications and recommendations for government

- ODPM and GOs should consider the ways in which resourcing and support to LSPs and to partners (both organisations and individuals) is provided nationally and/or regionally, to ensure that LSPs are adequately resourced and supported, in both NRF and non-NRF areas.
- Government overall should to recognise the need for LSPs to focus their energy and resources. The capacity of LSPs to take on further issues must be considered before decisions are made to add to their remits. Government Offices can help to ensure that the strategies and targets of RDAs and other regional and subregional bodies reflect an appropriate concern for LSPs strategic priorities.

DEVELOPING STRATEGY

Issues and research questions

- 3.1 If a local strategic partnership is to live up to its name, then clearly a capacity to develop effective strategic perspectives is central to its remit. This section deals with:
- The challenges which LSPs are facing in developing strategy.
 - The processes which LSPs have employed in developing Community Strategies and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies.
- 3.2 The key research question is:
- How successful have LSPs been to date in agreeing a common vision with partners, and developing local strategies (including Community Strategies and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies) which are shared and provide an effective basis for action?

Findings

- 3.3 The vast majority of LSPs have responded enthusiastically to the requirement to produce **Community and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies**. The more strategic approach, to neighbourhood renewal particularly, which this implies is a very positive development.
- 3.4 The development of LNRs was initially driven by the need to access the NRF, and the early strategies were very **varied in quality**. Some LSPs have developed the capacity to produce strong and effective strategies, but many LNRs fell between being strategic and being action oriented. A significant proportion of strategies contained little or no discussion of lead agencies or delivery mechanisms, sometimes reflecting an over-dominant local authority role.
- 3.5 Community Strategy building has in general moved more slowly, especially in two tier areas, where establishing the relationship between county and district LSPs has taken time and resources. In some locations strategies reflect a positive combination of top-down drivers from central government and local, bottom up initiative, but where Community Strategies were developed as a compilation of existing strategies, it can be difficult to identify the extra dimension that the LSP adds.
- 3.6 The processes of partnership building and strategy formation are intertwined, but strategic capacity presupposes a certain level of progress in developing the partnership arrangements and building trust amongst members. In developing strategy, however, few LSPs so far have drawn upon the wider literature and experience of strategic alliances and collaborative strategy, or explored alternative models of strategic planning. Strategic analysis emphasises the need for LSPs to recognise and be sensitive to their institutional and social context if they are to maximise their relevance and levels of participation.
- 3.7 Inclusive strategy making (whether for Community Strategies or LNRs) requires a high level of **skills and expertise** within the LSP staff team, and LSPs may need to augment their capacity and skills in this area. But it also frequently relies on substantial inputs by partner organisations, and LSPs face challenges in reconciling the remits and requirements of different stakeholders within the membership of the LSP and between the LSP and local politicians, local people and central government.
- 3.8 Although the pace and scale of activity varies widely, many of the strategic issues are **common to NRF and non-NRF LSPs**. Indeed a number of non-NRF LSPs are pursuing some form of neighbourhood policy and practice, suggesting that there is potential to engage LSPs beyond NRF areas in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.
- 3.9 There are potential tensions for LSPs in developing strategy between **cross-cutting, thematic issues** and the **single-issue planning** of partner agencies. For example, in transport a stronger relationship needs to be built between accessibility planning (involving a range of considerations in addition to transport) and Local Transport Plans (setting out the priorities of the Local Transport Authority). Similar points emerge in relation to other cross-cutting themes such as sustainability or liveability.

**DEVELOPING STRATEGY:
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Implications for LSPs

- The requirements to produce Community and LNRs has had very positive effects in many localities but the quality of the strategies is very varied. Some LSPs have developed the capacity to produce strong and effective strategies; others still need to augment this capacity.
- A challenge for LSPs is to find ways to balance national and local drivers and priorities; and to ensure that Community Strategies and LNRs connect with each other, and with other key initiatives such as LPSAs.
- Another challenge for LSPs is to ensure that local public sector bodies, including the police, health, Job Centre Plus, Learning and Skills Councils, and Passenger Transport Authorities, contribute fully to the strategies of the partnership, alongside the local authority.
- There may well be scope for more LSPs in non-NRF areas to develop neighbourhood renewal strategies or initiatives.

Implications and recommendations for government

- ODPM and GOs may need to consider how best to support the strategic planning capacity of LSPs.
- The NRU with GOs should consider how non-NRF LSPs can be encouraged to contribute to the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.
- Central government departments should consider ways to ensure the full participation of local public sector bodies in, and shared accountability for, the preparation and delivery of Community and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies. For example this requirement could be included within their performance assessment frameworks and inspection regimes.

ACTION, IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Issues and research questions

- 4.1 This chapter deals with issues of action, implementation and delivery, including:
- the relationship between the strategic – often thematic – aims of LSPs and the delivery programmes of agencies;
 - the extent to which action planning is assisted or hindered by the existence of LSPs in two tier areas.
 - the development of performance management systems
 - the central question of ‘mainstreaming’.
- 4.2 Key research questions are:

- How effectively are LSPs managing the links between LSP led strategy and agency delivery?
- With what focus and into which policy areas are LSPs moving?
- Can LSPs in two tier areas develop a common focus?
- Does performance management offer a framework for structuring delivery?
- How far are LSPs successful in promoting mainstream programme change?

Findings

- 4.3 LSPs are **progressing from strategy to implementation**, but often this is proving a slow process. Much action and delivery planning still lies (only sometimes by design) at the level of thematic sub partnerships or individual partner agencies
- 4.4 LSPs are faced with what is potentially a **huge policy agenda**, and there is a danger that effort will be dissipated and ineffective because it is too widely spread given the resources available. Whilst government increasingly suggests that the LSP has a role to play in developing local responses to a range of sectoral policy initiatives, it is not always clear which issues are to be the lead responsibility of the LSP and which of the local authority or another agency. Government departments may, unintentionally, as part of engaging with LSPs, create additional pressures and overload.
- 4.5 There are differences between those **two tier areas** where the county sees its role as complementing district community strategies (to the extent of not having an LSP), and those areas where there is complementary, sometimes competing, activity. County councils have more capacity to support strategic partnership work – especially in relation to small districts. This can be helpful if deployed sensitively. Though there are inevitable tensions in two tier areas (not least where the threat of reorganisation is seen as more immediate), neither differences between tiers nor political differences need represent a major impediment to LSP working.
- 4.6 Most LSPs regard **performance management** as a very important, but complex and sometimes confusing issue. LSPs are currently at different stages, often focussing on monitoring rather than utilisation of monitoring information to manage performance. Indeed some are still in the process of getting partners to agree that active performance management as opposed to monitoring is a legitimate activity for the LSP.
- 4.7 Performance managing an LSP is different from the task in a single organisation. An LSP is a multi-partner, voluntary body, it manages a complex agenda, its members have different aims and approaches. Indicators are hard to agree, outcome focussed management remains relatively less advanced.
- 4.8 In developing a performance management system, LSPs have to combine assessment of delivery of outcomes on the ground, the working of the partnership itself, and the value added by the LSP. Many LSPs have or are developing systems to

address the first two of these components, but much less progress has been made in the assessment of added value.

- 4.9 Leading edge LSPs are now making progress in shifting priorities and altering mainstream behaviour, but for many LSPs **‘mainstreaming’ is a major challenge**. Progress is often slow and it can be difficult to identify the extra dimension the LSP adds. In this context, we distinguish between two approaches.
- **Strategic mainstreaming** is the refocusing of mainstream programmes (and mainstream funding) onto targets which are agreed and shared by local partners, reflecting the pattern of local needs. In relation to neighbourhood renewal mainstreaming concentrates primarily on the refocusing of programmes onto priority neighbourhoods.
 - **Initiative mainstreaming** describes a “bottom up” approach, under which the aim is to spread approaches and learning from localised, short-term pilots, frequently on the periphery of mainstream services, to mainstream programmes; and to achieve sustainable funding for these pilots.
- 4.10 The absence of clear guidance/instructions from ‘parent’ departments, pressure on resources, lack of understanding between agencies all represent **barriers to change**, but a major issue remains the **absence of clear incentives** for LSPs to do more mainstreaming. Nevertheless there is evidence of progress in some localities towards main programme change and integration. The main driving organisations are the local authority, the police and health organisations and senior/middle management commitment is crucial to collaborative working.
- 4.11 **Neighbourhood renewal funding** (and area-based initiatives in general) can be a powerful learning tool and stimulus to mainstreaming. Most importantly **‘locality’ planning** between the level of the LSP/local authority and the neighbourhood is fertile ground for main programme reshaping – close enough to delivery to be responsive to community; far enough above the small area to make main programme planning feasible.
- 4.12 §In relation to resource management, **targeted funding** can be used to lever change in the mainstream. It is important that adequate mechanisms are established to ensure that successful bottom-up initiatives are sustainable, but area-based targeted funding can also have a perverse effect in diverting agency thinking about the mainstream. **Pooling of budgets** is only one of several ways in which partners can align resources, and the principal barriers to pooling are cultural and organisational rather than technical. There is scope for many LSPs, subject to a clear view of their priorities and capacities, to develop their activity in a number of policy areas, from transport to equalities and from generational issues to sustainability.

ACTION, IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Implications for LSPs

- There is scope for many LSPs, subject to a clear view of their priorities and capacities, to develop their activity on a number of themes and in a number of policy areas, from accessibility and transport to equalities and from generational issues to sustainability.
- LSPs need to ensure that they play a number of roles in delivering their strategic objectives. These include:
 - collection and pooling of information on patterns of resource use
 - strategic review of options for realignment of resources
 - facilitation of change reconciliation of tensions
 - monitoring and evaluation
 - learning and dissemination of results.
- The main local obstacles to mainstreaming are not technical, but cultural and organisational. Too strong an emphasis on pooling budgets can divert attention from the range of positive opportunities open to organisations to engage in joint resourcing and/or aligning resources.
- Securing the commitment of middle managements to mainstreaming will require both national and local initiative in management development and capacity building.
- LSPs should develop performance management arrangements that are appropriate to local needs, and ensure that whatever approach is taken it is integral to the operation of the LSP.

Implications for government

- Government should make clearer which issues are to be the lead responsibility of the LSP and which of the local authority or an agency. Where the LSP is expected to take a lead, government departments should address their guidance/requests for action directly to the LSP. The capacity of LSPs to take on further issues must be considered before such decisions are made.
- ODPM should give further consideration to the extent to which the performance of the LSP is, or should be, linked to the CPA performance of the local authority (or vice versa), in order to ensure that the effort put into the CPA process by local authorities augments (rather than detracts from) their commitment to the LSP.
- The role of the LSP in facilitating the alignment of resources and strategic mainstreaming must be encouraged centrally, but forcing the pace of change unduly could be counter-productive.
- In terms of addressing one of the key levels at which mainstreaming needs to be developed – middle management – national initiatives in capacity building and cross-sector management development will be important.

- The top-down imposition of pooled budgets is not regarded locally as helpful. Decisions are better taken locally about whether joint resourcing is needed and, if so, of what type.
- In two-tier areas, GOs may be best placed to advise on how and at what levels agency/public body representation on and contribution to LSP working can be most effective.
- Government Offices should also help to ensure that the targets/performance measures for RDAs include an appropriate concern with LSPs and their strategic priorities.
- The proliferation of different performance management frameworks for partners and theme partnerships (e.g. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships) can undermine the development of an agreed integrated local framework. A unified list of core requirements agreed by the relevant government departments, within which partnerships should be able to develop their own performance management arrangements, would overcome this problem.
- In the context of targets and performance measurement, and the importance of incentives and rewards (e.g. LPSA and post-CPA freedoms and flexibilities), LSP performance might be enhanced if it was clear whether and what rewards might stem from good performance.

ADDING VALUE TOWARDS OUTCOMES

Issues and research questions

- 5.1 This chapter presents early findings from the evaluation on the contribution of LSPs to outcomes in terms of improved services and more effective and inclusive local governance.
- 5.2 Key research questions
 - To what extent have LSPs identified specific ways in which they need to add value to local efforts to improve governance and services?
 - What successes can they point to so far?

FINDINGS

- 5.3 Demonstrating the value that LSPs are adding is **extremely difficult**. Many LSPs are able to identify **process outcomes**, such as the development of shared policies, information sharing, and community engagement. There is therefore some evidence that LSPs are producing outcomes such as enhanced strategic capacity and greater community legitimacy – the improvements in governance suggested by our theory of change.

5.4 However, few LPS are able to point to **specific impacts** in terms of improved services and tangible improvements in social, economic or environmental outcomes for local people. This is partly because it is very difficult to unravel chains of causality, and partly because many LSPs are at an early stage in their development and have not yet had sufficient time to make an impact on the ground. Neither have LSPs assessed the costs of investment in partnership working. Hence there is no basis as yet for assessing the extent to which LSPs creates value proportionate to their real costs.

5.5 The difficulty encountered in identifying concrete examples of improved outcomes on the ground so far is likely to be in large part a reflection of factors identified earlier in this report, including:

- The **stage of LSP development** – many LSPs have not been in existence for long enough to have had much tangible impact, and up to now have spent much of their time on the process of establishing themselves rather than substantive work on policies, programmes or projects. The evaluation therefore suggests that too much should not be expected of LSPs too soon.
- LSPs are encouraged to focus on outcomes rather than intermediate measures. However, there are increasing **analytical difficulties** in moving from measuring inputs and outputs to measuring outcomes, which are often strongly affected by external factors, are difficult to influence, and are often by their nature slow to change. These are compounded in the case of cross-cutting issues, which typically require an input from several partners. This makes it very difficult for the partnership to demonstrate that it is adding value by contributing to improved outcomes.
- The chains of causality are extremely complex. Much of the detailed work which might be easier to relate to outcomes is undertaken by sub partnerships, and as such is not always seen as an activity of the LSP itself. In other cases the influence of partnership working on the decisions and actions of partners – which is what, in most cases, directly leads to change on the ground - may be subtle, indirect and cumulative rather than a simple reflection of a discussion or decision at a partnership meeting.

5.6 This does not necessarily mean there is no added value in terms of outcomes, simply that at this stage it is not possible to demonstrate it. Developing an approach to the assessment of added value and outcomes will be an important strand in the next stage of this study, as our theory of change suggests.

**ADDING VALUE TOWARDS OUTCOMES:
IMPLICATIONS FOR LSP POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Implications for LSPs

- Many LSPs need to develop more effective tools for monitoring and maximising the contribution they are making to improvements in service delivery and in local governance.
- There are different approaches which LSPs can adopt to identify the value they are adding.
- In evolving approaches to value added, LSPs need to take account of the costs, including hidden costs of LSPs, and examine the extent to which they add 'proportionate value'.

Implications for government

- Government should recognise the difficulties LSPs face in demonstrating added value, especially given the early stage of LSP development.
- There are important networking, facilitation and dissemination roles for government and GOs in promoting innovative and effective approaches to identifying the value added by LSPs.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 6.1 In the longer term, the success of LSPs will, as our theory of change suggests, be evident in the extent to which they provide a robust and sustainable local context within which the key challenges facing localities can be managed, and within which initial successes create a virtuous cycle of improved outcomes for partners and communities.
- 6.2 This is not an issue upon which this interim report provides evidence. A number of substantial further pieces of work are however due to be undertaken and completed during the remainder of the research programme in the period up to spring 2005. These include:
- A 2004 survey of all LSPs.
 - Further survey and related work, on issues including transport and accessibility planning, leadership issues and business involvement.
 - 3 Action learning sets on (1) Rationalising plans and policies, (2) Two tier working, and (3) Regional and sub-regional relationships.
 - Regional dissemination workshops developed in co-ordination with GOs. Further work on the nine case studies, leading to a final case studies report.
 - Issues papers on The Theory of Change, Accessibility and Transport Planning, Business engagement, 'Below the LSP' – neighbourhood and area issues, LSPs

and Leadership, Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement, and a further title to be decided.

- 6.3 The Final Report on Stage 1 of the evaluation (March 2005) will provide more evidence on both processes and outcomes and on the sustainability of progress in LSPs, and will also provide the base for further (summative) evaluation of the impacts and added value of LSPs (preliminarily scheduled for 2005 – 2007).

RELATED OUTPUTS

- 7.1 The following reports from the national evaluation are available at:
[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_lo
cgov](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_lo
cgov)

- Report of 2002 survey of all LSPs, 2002
- Interim report of 9 longitudinal case studies, 2003
- Case studies of LSP performance management systems, 2003
- Assessment of LNRSs in the 87 NRF LSPs, 2003
- Governance – Action learning set report, 2004
- Mainstreaming – Action learning set report, 2004
- Community Engagement – Action learning set report, 2004
- Performance Management – Action learning set report, 2004
- LSPs and Transport Accessibility Planning, 2004
- LSP Theory of change issue paper, 2004

PART 1

Introduction

Local Strategic Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships are a major innovation in the pattern of local governance in England¹. An LSP is a body which:

- Brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together;
- Is a non-statutory, non-executive organisation;
- Operates at a level which enables strategic decisions to be taken yet is close enough to the grassroots to allow direct community engagement.

Initial guidance on the establishment of LSPs was issued by government in early 2001. Currently, LSPs have been set up in the vast majority of localities in England. In those 88 LA areas containing the most deprived neighbourhoods in England, eligibility for Government funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), is conditional on the existence of an LSP and the production of a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS). However, most localities (in NRF areas or not) have reacted enthusiastically to the government's proposals.

A number of government initiatives relate closely to the core tasks of LSPs:

- **The introduction of statutory Community Strategies.** These are intended to improve the economic, environmental, and social well-being of each area, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development across the country. Local authorities have many of the responsibilities and powers needed to bring about improvements in their communities, but other public services, local people, business and the voluntary and community sectors also need to be able to contribute. It is therefore the task of the LSP to prepare and implement the community strategy for the area.
- **Steps to rationalise and simplify existing partnerships.** It is recognised that there is an urgent need to rationalise the confusing proliferation of partnerships, plans and initiatives at local level, to reduce duplication and unnecessary bureaucracy and to make it easier for partners, including those outside the statutory sector, to get involved. LSPs have been tasked with the 'rationalisation' of local partnerships within their area.

¹ See http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_locgov for a summary statement.

- **The launch of the National Strategy for neighbourhood Renewal** which aims to narrow the gap between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of England, with common goals of lower unemployment and crime, and better health, education, housing and physical environment. Effective neighbourhood renewal is seen to depend on services working together to plan and deliver concerted improvements in public services. Local people, business and the voluntary sector all need to be able to contribute. It is a task of the LSP to develop and deliver a LNRS in the 87 areas².
- **The development of local public service agreements** between central and local government to tackle key national and local priorities (on health, education, crime, employment, and transport), with agreed flexibilities, pump-priming and financial rewards if improvements are delivered. Local authorities need to show that their proposals are supported by local people, and need to work with other partners to deliver LPSA targets, through the agency of the LSP.

This challenging set of tasks require LSPs to:

- Build common purpose and shared commitment among partners, avoiding the domination of any one partner or set of partners.
- Develop and publicise common aims and priorities.
- Share local information and good practice.
- Identify, encourage and support effective local initiatives.
- Develop a variety of means to consult with local people.
- Develop a common performance management system.

The National Evaluation of LSPs

- The objective of the National Evaluation is to support LSPs and policy-makers at local, regional and central levels, and to evaluate the progress LSPs are making.
- Jointly commissioned by three ODPM research divisions (LRGRU, NRU and RAE) and the Department for Transport (DfT), the first 3 years of the programme was commissioned in March 2002, and is being undertaken by the Universities of Warwick, Liverpool John Moores, West of England, Bristol and the Office for Public Management. It comprises a Feasibility Study, Formative Evaluation and Action Research (March 2002 – March 2005). A Summative Evaluation of impacts and effectiveness is provisionally planned for 2005 – 2007.

² There are 87 LSPs in the 88 LA areas eligible for NRF funding (2 NRF LAs in West Cornwall have created a single merged LSP).

Feasibility Study (March – September 2002)

The Feasibility Study consulted a variety of local, regional and central stakeholders, including a 2002 survey of every English LSP to establish:

- What LSPs want advice and support on.
- How to identify and disseminate good practice.
- How best to provide LSPs with practical support.
- Basic information and data regarding the status and development of LSPs

Formative Evaluation (Autumn 2002 – March 2005)

The formative evaluation will assess the processes, preliminary impacts and effectiveness of LSPs. It has adopted a ‘theory of change’ approach to identify what works, how and why.

The evaluation includes nine case studies, a major postal survey of all LSPs in 2004, and a range of smaller targeted surveys. The case studies, which cover a wide range of locations, including one in each region, are being undertaken in collaboration with the following LSPs:

LSP longitudinal case studies (2003-2005)

Easington	Tameside	Leeds
Nottingham*	West Suffolk	Herefordshire
Gloucester	Southwark	Hampshire

* Broader sub-regional case studies

The case studies will provide in-depth experience of the ways in which LSPs – in both NRF and non-NRF areas – are developing their structures, plans and activities.

In addition to the principal components of the study, a ‘call-down’ facility exists for more specific research on related aspects. Currently this includes studies on:

1. the role of public sector bodies in LSPs,
2. an assessment of Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies produced by LSPs in NRF areas,
3. an analysis of perceived good practice in the use of shared or aligned performance indicators, and
4. a workshop on mainstreaming.

Action research (Winter 2002/3 – March 2005)

In addition to the 9 evaluatory case studies, there are 8 issue-based action learning sets, each bringing together approximately 12 LSPs to discuss one issue in depth and to develop effective practice. Each set runs over approximately one year.

Action Learning Sets	
2003	2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstreaming: Pooling and aligning resources • Community engagement • Performance Management • Strategic planning • Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two tier contexts • Regional and sub regional relationships • Rationalisation of activities, plans and partnerships

The choice of issues has been determined directly from consultation during the feasibility study and, in particular, the specific requests from LSPs made in the 2002 survey. Membership of the sets is chosen to represent perceived good practice on each topic. Members have been recruited through responses from the 2002 survey, plus recommendations from GOs, consultants and central stakeholders.

In order to reach more LSPs directly, from early 2004, a programme of regional dissemination workshops will bring together representatives of LSPs in each GO region to disseminate emerging findings and share good practice. These sets will, where appropriate, integrate with existing regional LSP networks.

Outputs and dissemination

- The research will produce outputs on an ongoing basis, including:
- A report for each of the 2002 and 2004 surveys.
- A series of themed issue papers from the formative evaluation.
- Interim and final reports on the case studies.
- Reports, toolkits and briefing notes from the action learning.
- Interim and final reports.
- Dissemination strategy of the regional workshops, conferences, seminars and publications.

Findings and good practice guidance materials will be made available throughout the research programme through a range of media including websites (ODPM, IDeA Knowledge and the NRU's renewal.net). The action learning groups and regional dissemination workshops will share experiences and test and disseminate new

toolkits and guidance materials in a hands-on manner. A national conference is planned in 2005. These activities will be signposted to LSPs and stakeholders.

Summative Evaluation (provisionally 2005 – 2007)

Summative ‘impact’ evaluation will commence in 2005, although baseline information (and preliminary impacts) will be collected from 2002. Assessing the impact and ‘added value’ of LSPs on the achievement of local and central aims and objectives will involve linking action research and formative evaluation findings with evaluation of the impacts and effectiveness of LSPs, LSP activities and policies.

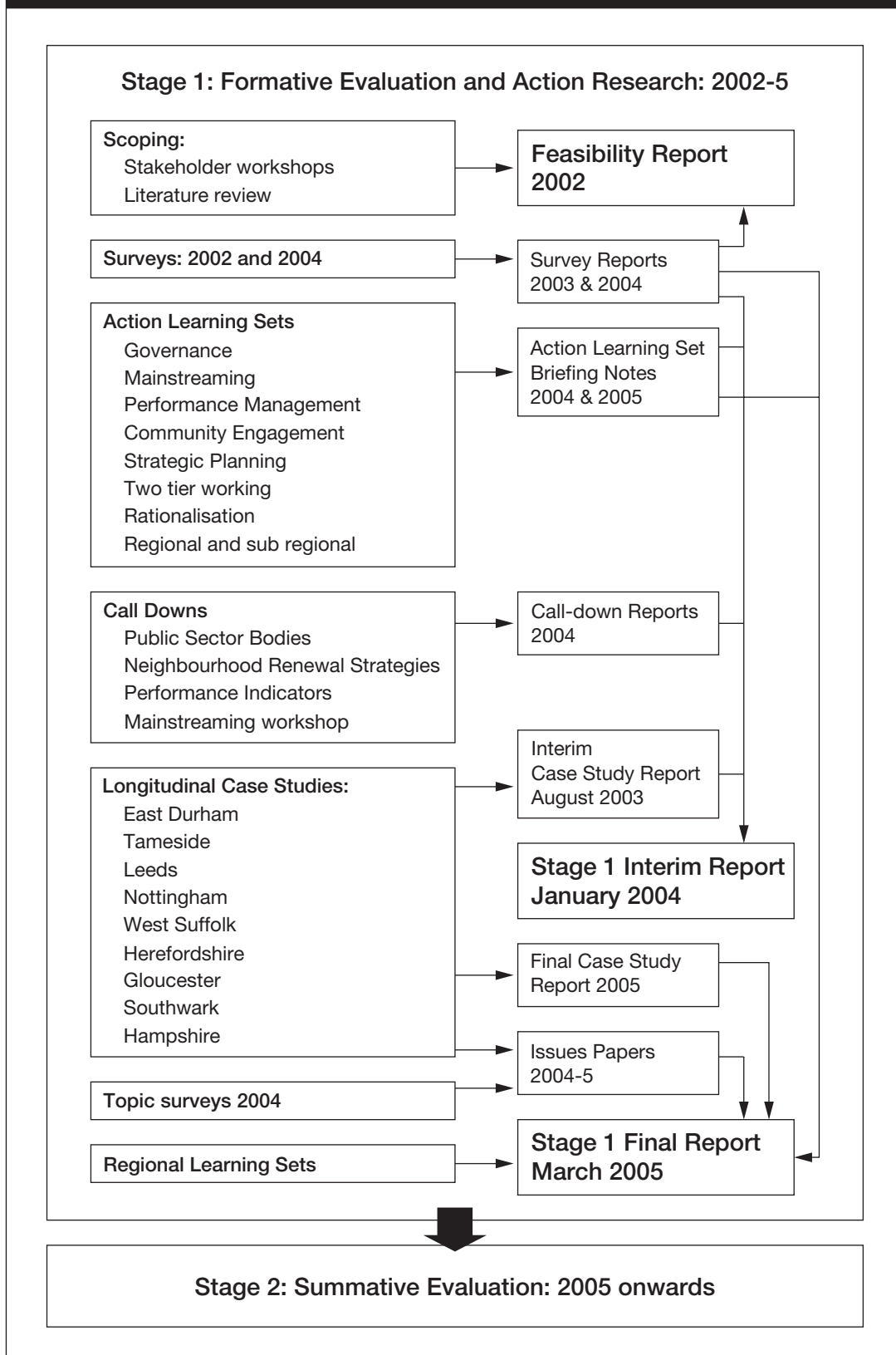
Work undertaken to date

Diagram 1 shows the main elements of the national evaluation. Those elements which have been undertaken to date and which have been drawn upon in preparing this Interim Report are underlined, and are as follows³:

- Report of the 2002 survey
- Interim report on the case studies
- Reports of the five 2003 action learning sets on:
 - Performance management
 - Governance
 - Community engagement
 - Strategic planning
 - Mainstreaming and aligning resources.
- Call down studies on:
 - Local neighbourhood renewal strategies
 - Mapping approaches to integrating performance indicators
 - The role of public sector bodies in LSPs (initial report).
 - Mainstreaming workshop
- Issues papers on :
 - Transport and accessibility planning
 - Theory of Change

³ Reports published to date are available at <http://www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/strat/htm>

Diagram 1: Overview of the Evaluation



A Theory of Change approach

In developing our initial proposal for the LSPs evaluation, we took the view that there were certain advantages of a theory of change (TOC) approach:

- It can provide a set of agreed perspectives to drive the evaluation
- It assists in focussing the evaluation not only on what works but why and how; and indeed whether policy is working.
- In addition, the adoption of a TOC approach should be helpful in linking this evaluation to the overarching evaluation of the LGMA.

We suggested that the Government's 'system of assumptions'³ about the role of LSPs was built around the proposition that a framework of strategic partnership at the local level will create more inclusive and pluralist local governance, bringing together key organisations and actors (from the three spheres of state, market and civil society) to identify communities' top priorities and needs, and work with local people to provide them. This is consistent with the wide perception in the policy community of the advantages of partnership working as the way of achieving effective outcomes, and solutions to so-called 'wicked issues', by building trust, sharing knowledge and resources, and working collaboratively across boundaries.

Our initial understanding of the theory of change was outlined to stakeholders during the consultation process undertaken during the feasibility study. The general perception was that a theory of change is a good mechanism through which to drive the research programme. In the course of the work undertaken during the evaluation during 2003, including both the case studies and the action research, we have been able to develop our approach further. The interviews for the first phase of the case studies work, for example, were structured around the TOC framework. We have organised two workshops within the evaluation team, in May and October 2003, to discuss the implications of the ongoing work for the theory of change. This has enabled us to develop our approach in several ways:

- Elaborating the theory of change which appears to underlie the introduction of LSPs by government.
- Elaborating a model of the set of linked processes through which LSPs attempt to achieve change.
- Developing this model towards a more detailed and operational framework to guide the evaluation, through the identification of a set of empirical questions based on it.

As was noted above, the starting point for our application of the TOC approach was a recognition of the government's 'system of assumptions' about the role of LSPs, as stated, for example, in the White Paper, Local Leadership, Local Choice.

⁴ The idea of a 'system of assumptions' is not intended to imply an explicit and fully shared set of assumptions in government. There are inevitably differences of view and changes over time. Nonetheless, key statements, such as the Local Leadership, Local Choice White Paper do embody a coherent set of assumptions which have in broad terms been influential and long lasting.

This set of assumptions can, we think, be broken down into a set of five linked theoretical propositions. These together involve assumptions about process; about vision and strategy; about implementation and delivery; and about outcomes. These assumptions are set out below. At the same time, we have elaborated a related model of the processes through which LSPs achieve change, set out in the diagram below.

Theoretical Proposition	Relates to:
TP1 Inclusive processes of negotiation and deliberation generate a shared analysis, sense of direction and capacity which...	Setting up the LSP: process and capacity (Part 2, Chapter 1)
TP2 Unifies and adds clarity to the local governance agenda and priorities for service delivery, so that...	Developing Strategy (Chapter 2)
TP3 Partners will then implement the vision/strategy, both within their own organisation, and multilaterally	Action, implementation and delivery (Chapter 3)
TP4 In doing so, service delivery and governance gains occur because agencies have a better understanding of what the community wants and work together to deliver	Added Value towards Outcomes (Chapter 4)
TP5 Success creates a cycle of increasing and sustainable outcomes, increased social capital and good inter-institutional relationships	Sustainability (Part 3)

This diagrammatic representation assumes that there are a number of key links in the chain of causation which will determine the extent to which LSPs come to represent an effective element within the structures and processes of local governance.

- a) Emerging LSPs are conditioned by the national and local policy contexts. The national policy environment within which LSPs are emerging is one of major change in the contemporary forms of governance, with new forms emerging in response to the deficiencies of traditional, large bureaucratic ‘silos’, a more fragmented and fluid set of institutional structures and relationships, and changing relationships between the state, the market and civil society. Many of these tendencies are closely related to the government’s key policy drivers such as the modernisation of government and local government, continuous improvement in the performance of public services, and joined up working to tackle cross-cutting, ‘wicked’ issues such as social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal.
- b) At the same time, the local policy contexts in which LSPs are emerging are strongly conditioned by such trends, but will respond in differing ways as a result of local factors. The capacity of emerging LSPs is initially conditioned by the history of past partnership working and the character and capacities of key partners, bringing ‘to the table’ a set of vested interests, knowledge, aspirations, hopes and fears. Initially therefore LSPs will be able to draw on some resources, but will be seeking to acquire more and transform others, adding value and seeking synergy.

These national and local contextual factors are not merely an input to the ‘forming’ stage of the LSP, but a continuing influence. In turn, if LSPs are

successful, they will increasingly influence, as well as being influenced by, these national and local contexts.

- c) The structures and processes established by each LSP then provide the framework within which these resources can be drawn upon, as the LSP develops its own working practices, procedures and protocols, and starts to form its own organisational culture, as trust is built and leadership style established, in the process of determining its priorities within the parameters set by government guidance and policy objectives. We distinguish between the organisational arrangements (or hard systems) and institutional arrangements (or soft systems) which LSPs set up, to recognise the importance of both, and the interrelationship between them; and their conditioning effect on the capacity of the LSP.
- d) These processes of ‘forming’ the LSP will condition its capacity – to develop vision and strategy; to put strategic approaches into practice, and in both contexts to function as a learning institution. We distinguish in the diagram between the strategic role – the development and implementation of the community strategy and neighbourhood renewal strategy – and the sphere of action, implementation and delivery.
- e) The model also highlights the crucial issue of the ways in which the LSP may add value, through its actions, to outcomes in terms of changes in governance or service improvements.
- f) It is upon this linked chain of causation that outcomes in terms of both improved services and more inclusive local governance will depend. In turn, the success of the LSP in facilitating such outcomes will impact back upon the legitimacy, authority and capacity of the wider local governance system – and on the position within it of the LSP itself.

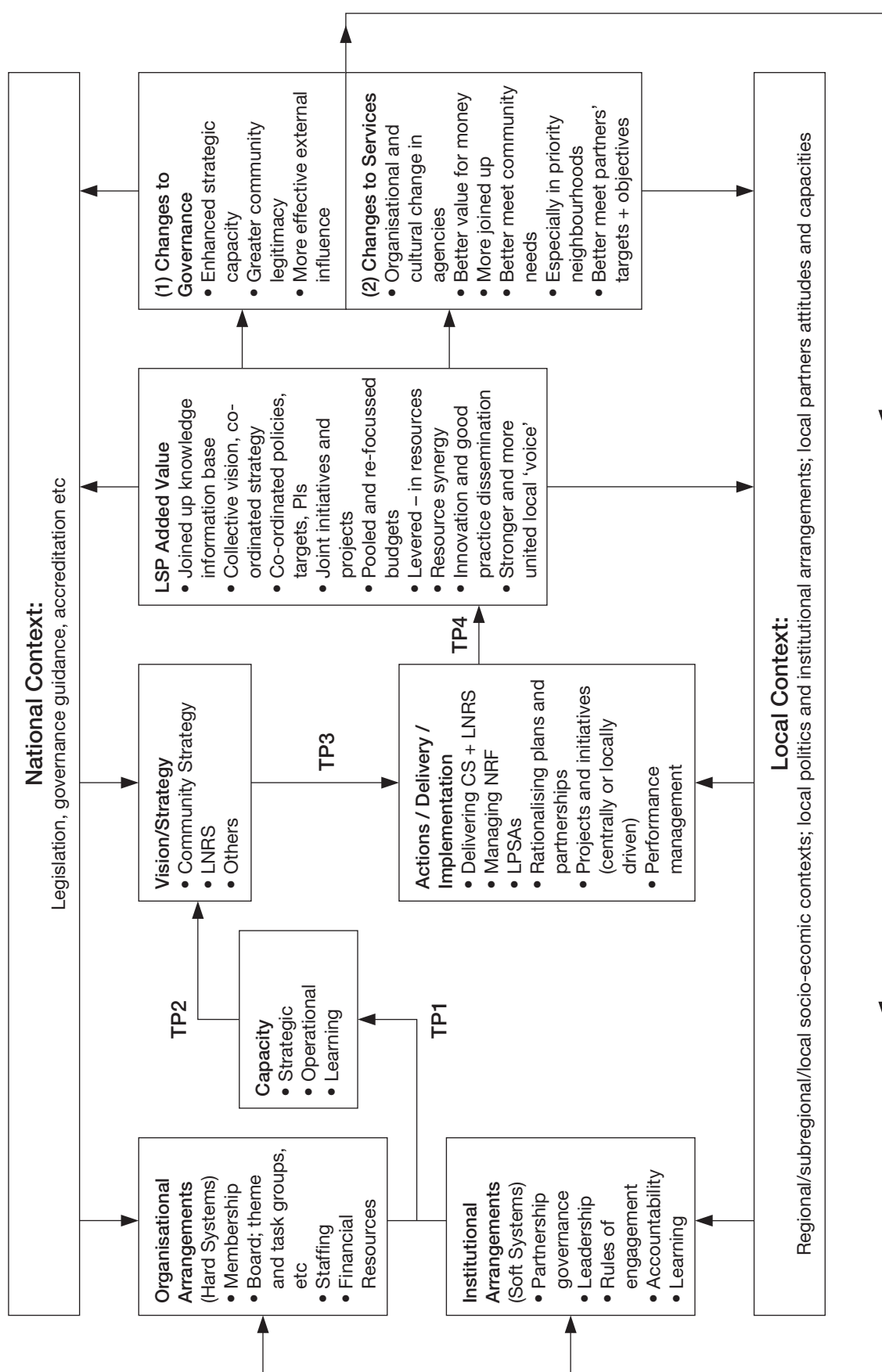
Finally, the diagram links the five theoretical propositions to this model.

Clearly, any model such as this is a simplification, in at least three ways:

- Processes are more complex than this simple linear progression would suggest.
- The model does not reflect the possibility that different LSPs, or different stakeholders may espouse different views, based on different theoretical propositions, about LSP purposes and processes.
- The model implies a virtuous circle, in which the linked theoretical propositions are validated in practice. It would also be possible to model a ‘vicious circle’, in which this is not the case.

Despite these limitations, the model appears helpful both in drawing together the findings from the research to date, and potentially in driving the next stages of the research. While this Interim Report focuses more on the early elements of the model, it is anticipated that the Final Report of this phase of the evaluation, and the Summative Evaluation, will focus increasingly on action, added value and outcomes.

LSPs Theory of Change : The Virtuous Circle



PART 2

Findings

Introduction: Structure of Part 2

This is the main section of the report. It draws together and synthesises the findings emerging from the evaluation to date, including those from the formative evaluation, the action research and the call-down studies. It also sets out the key policy and practice implications of the evaluation findings, for LSPs themselves and for stakeholders including government. This Part of the report is structured primarily around the elements of the theory of change, as follows:

1. SETTING UP THE LSP

This chapter relates to Proposition 1 of the theory of change. It discusses LSPs' organisational arrangements including membership; arrangements for the Board, theme and task groups etc; staffing; financial resources; partnership governance; leadership and accountability. It asks how inclusive and effective the organisational arrangements and systems developed by LSPs are, and how far these provide them with the capacity (strategic, operational, for learning) to address their core purposes (improved services, better local governance), including their capacity to deliver neighbourhood renewal.

2. DEVELOPING STRATEGY

The focus of this chapter (Theory of change Proposition 2) is on the strategic function of the LSP: development of Community Strategies, Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies and other strategic initiatives. It assesses how successful LSPs have been to date in agreeing a common vision with partners, and then developing local strategies which are shared and provide an effective basis for action.

3. ACTION, IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Chapter 3 relates to Proposition 3. It is concerned with the delivery of the LSP's strategies, especially the Community Strategy and LNRS, but also other centrally or locally driven actions and initiatives, including specific sectoral policy issues e.g. transport.

It asks how effectively LSPs are adapting to a changing role in moving from strategy to action and delivery, and how successful they are being in bringing partners together in implementing agreed priorities.

4. TOWARDS OUTCOMES: LSP ADDED VALUE

This chapter presents early findings from the evaluation on issues linked to Proposition 4 of the theory of change: the contribution and added value of LSPs to outcomes in terms of improved services and more effective and inclusive local governance.

Specific findings from the evaluation relating to neighbourhood renewal and NRF LSPs are discussed as appropriate throughout the report.

It is important to note that this is an interim report on the formative and action research stage of the national evaluation of LSPs. The findings which we report here reflect this interim and formative, rather than summative, phase of the evaluation, and also the fact that LSPs are themselves relatively recent institutions which are still in a developmental phase. This means that our findings are concentrated towards the early stages of the theory of change model, rather than the later stages.

The evidence upon which this Part of the report is based consists primarily of:

- The qualitative data from the initial phase of nine case studies, and from five action learning sets. The research therefore draws on relatively in-depth evidence from a significant number of LSPs. However, it must be stressed that the case study data reflects the first stage of a two-part case study programme, and the action learning material derives from an action research context in which the primary emphasis is on learning rather than data collection.
- The 2002 survey of all LSPs. This remains a unique source of quantitative information but is now of decreasing value given the rapidity of change since it was undertaken.
- Call-down studies which provide in-depth treatment of specific issues.

Including all elements of the evaluation, we have been able to draw in some way on the experience of well over 100 LSPs, some very substantially, others only on specific issues. Where we refer, without further qualification, to ‘many’, ‘a few’ or ‘most’ LSPs, we generally have this broad evidence base in mind. However, at the beginning of each chapter, and again when it seems particularly appropriate, we have indicated which specific sources are drawn on to support particular sections of the report.

1. Setting up the LSP⁵

This section deals with:

- The national, regional and local contexts within which LSPs have developed and the pre-existing stock of experience and capacity that are brought to partnership working
- The organisational arrangements which LSPs have made, including issues of membership; arrangements for the Board, theme and task groups etc; staffing; financial resources.
- The 'soft systems' and processes through which LSPs operate – approaches to partnership governance; leadership; accountability; performance management etc.

Key research questions (derived from our theory of change) which are discussed are:

- How important is context – national and local – in influencing the direction and speed of travel of an individual LSP?
- How inclusive and effective are the different organisational arrangements and systems developed by LSPs?
- How far do these provide LSPs with the capacity (strategic, operational, for learning) to address their core purposes (improved services, better local governance), including their capacity to deliver neighbourhood renewal?

1.1 CONTEXT

1.1.1 National context

The public sector bodies call-down study, together with the case studies, confirm that the national context is crucial for LSPs. Community Strategies and Neighbourhood Renewal represent the main national drivers of LSPs. The national policy driver is evident in the way in which, in NRF areas, factors including the necessity of the LSP to access NRF funds, the requirement to produce a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, the accreditation process, and the greater level of support from GOs, has in general meant that NRF LSPs have made earlier and greater progress than elsewhere – though there are examples of both types which break this rule. National policy drivers, however, come in association with differential commitment from central departments to LSP working. Central departmental (and NDPB) instructions to local agencies about how to participate in LSPs appear to vary, although the evaluation team has as yet done little work on this national contextual aspect. Scattered evidence (e.g. about MoD and the Environment Agency) has emerged, but there remains uncertainty about exactly what the centre wants both to put in to LSPs and to get out of them.

⁵ This chapter draws on many elements of the evaluation, including the 2002 survey, the case studies, the governance and community engagement action learning sets, and other inputs on specific points.

National policies set the context in a number of *specific* areas of work. Thus the guidance on and requirements for community safety / health / education/ children partnerships and programmes shapes the constituent sub-partnerships which may make up the LSP. However, it is as yet not clear whether, when and how, many of these sub-partnerships (or in some cases local government departments) relate to the LSP and who carries responsibility for subsequent activity. The Children and Young People's Partnerships offer a recent example of such uncertainty in some of our case studies.

1.1.2 Regional Context

Regionalism provides an increasingly visible and significant context, although not one which LSPs can as yet accurately predict and respond to. The changing shape and function of regional governance (and GOs and RDAs in particular) confronts LSPs with an evolving environment. There is a governmental push, through the Regional Co-ordination Unit, towards an enhanced role for Government Offices for the Regions⁶, paralleled by the emergence of a number of organisations and institutions, in both private and voluntary sectors, concerned with good governance at the regional level. GOs, with responsibilities for neighbourhood renewal but also for the integration of the governmental presence in the regions as required by the RCU, are active members of some LSPs in some regions, less so in others. In NRF areas GOs have clear responsibilities for oversight of the NRS and the spending of NRF; elsewhere the role is less clear and whilst GOs are generally regarded as helpful, they are felt to have less influence in and over the main departments in Whitehall than with ODPM. GOs themselves point to the lack of resources to engage much with LSPs outside the NRF areas. At the same time Regional Development Agencies are now well established and are pushing for sub-regional strategies and matching partnership structures, which in some instances complement but in other cases overlap with and cause confusion for LSPs (e.g. Area Investment Frameworks in the SEEDA area, the Rural Regeneration Zone in the West Midlands). Where there is a lack of fit, or limited interaction, between LSPs and regional and subregional structures, joined up working across tiers of government will be difficult.

The Regional White Paper⁷ set out government proposals for regional governance, and most recently proposals have emerged for some regions to consider the possible move from representative, but non-elected, assemblies to direct democratic regional government. In a number of case study areas, most obviously the two tier localities, these changes strongly influence the ways in which partners approach LSP working.

One of the 2004 action learning sets will consider the regional and subregional context of LSPs.

⁶ Performance and Innovation Unit (2000) *Reaching Out: The Role of Central Government at Regional and Local Level*. Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit: London: HMSO Regional Co-ordination Unit (2000) Action Plan Regional Co-ordination Unit, London.

⁷ DTLR (2002) *Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions* (2002) London:

1.1.3 Local Context: Social and economic characteristics

Individual LSPs respond to the economic and social characteristics of their localities. For a number of the case studies, this reflects long-standing economic restructuring and considerable social and economic deprivation. In East Durham, Nottingham, Tameside and Southwark there are major issues of disadvantage and deprivation, with East Durham (Easington local authority) ranking 7th most deprived district in England. Nottingham and Leeds offer examples of polarised localities – considerable economic success, dynamic city centres and suburban expansion contrasting with areas of severe deprivation ('two speed cities'). Herefordshire and West Suffolk also offers contrasts – combining relative economic strength with disadvantage in small rural pockets of deprivation. Southwark, with Leeds and Nottingham, provides an example of locality with a rich and diverse multi-ethnic minority but other cases – Gloucester and Tameside – also illustrate the challenges facing LSPs in addressing minority issues. Hampshire and to a lesser extent Herefordshire and West Suffolk (as well as Eastleigh, Basingstoke and Broxtowe in particular) are areas of growth pressure and illustrate the issues surrounding growth management. Characteristics such as these go far to explain the needs which LSPs have identified, the priorities they are setting in community strategies and the activities which may begin to emerge from LSP decisions.

1.1.4 Local context: experience and capacity

The history of partnership working is crucial, providing experience of joint working, practice in collaborative skills, interorganisational understanding, and a base of membership from which the LSP can move forward. Several case-studies build on past partnerships with economic development and regeneration (and more recently community safety or Agenda 21) lying at the core, but partnership working has also introduced newer arenas of joint working (health, children, early years, learning, for example). The East Durham Task Force and the Southern Marches Partnership (in Herefordshire) are powerful examples of an LSP building on pre-existing capacity. The Leeds Initiative has over a decade of experience behind it. On the other hand in the Nottingham area the LSP arrangements (in Nottingham and in Broxtowe) have not built on the pre-existing Greater Nottingham partnership, and there has been to some extent a de-coupling of existing arrangements as separate local LSPs emerge for the districts with the GNP continuing.

Collaborative working and familiarity with other partners can reinforce a sense of local identity. Identity binds partners together with sense of common purpose (even Leeds was described by one interviewee as a village). This can be built around a common view/vision and can be about removing negative images (Gloucester, Basingstoke), about expressing a regional capital aspiration (Leeds as capital of the North), about creating a new image (Herefordshire as new unitary) or about generating a sense of history (Southwark stressing its historical tradition to give it identity within an anonymous inner London). For Herefordshire and Nottingham the most significant contextual feature of recent years has been the establishment of unitary local authorities.

However, even where there is a history of partnership working, pre-existing partnerships may require considerable re-engineering to equip them for a different

role and expectations, as the background research undertaken for the Strategic Planning action learning set illustrated.

In areas with less history of partnership working and where the local authority is smaller, capacity is limited by virtue of the relatively small size of the district (perhaps a general feature of many rural LSPs) and by the fact that individual districts (some formed in 1974) lack the identity which underpins a strong LSP. West Suffolk best illustrates the capacity problems facing the smaller district in a two tier system. In each of the districts the staff resource to support partnership work is very limited, as is the experience of partnership working. In such areas the county can be a significant player, and this is the case in West Suffolk (where the LSP covers two and a half districts). Suffolk County Council (SCC) has both more human resource capacity and more experience of strategic partnership, as a former NCR pathfinder. Its support, especially in relation to preparing the community strategy, has therefore been important. In other two tier areas (Gloucester, Basingstoke, East Durham for example) district-based LSPs display greater strengths and capacity, the first two having unitary aspirations.

1.1.5 Local context: geography, scale and competition

Administrative boundaries are artificial to many stakeholders and whilst being of considerable significance to local councils are less important for the private sector, for many of the larger voluntary organisations, and for a number of public service bodies or NDPBs. Thus Greater Nottingham, South-West Hampshire or the Blackwater Valley appear more natural areas for the planning and delivery of a number of sub-regional services – transport, economic development, planning and housing land – than the area covered by the LSP. The West Suffolk LSP area is functionally sensible, although the logic of boundaries has more to do with health, further education and policing than with physical planning issues.

The current context is also one of change – several councils have experienced the impact of electoral choice leading to a change in control, change in party balance, or change in political leadership (and with that sometimes LSP leadership).

The identity factor reappears when areas feel in competition one with another (West Suffolk/East Suffolk; Gloucester/Cheltenham, Basingstoke/Reading, East/West Durham) or where the activities of an RDA are built around a sub-regional identity, as in the Marches. In such circumstances LSPs can provide a focus for collaboration across boundaries (as in West Suffolk or in sub-regional partnerships) but can also less helpfully maintain an identity built on local government boundaries which may be inappropriate for the purposes of the planning and management of strategic change. Where LSPs have neighbourhood responsibilities we have not observed in the case studies, except in the case of Leeds, any discussion of the city-wide policies which would underpin the development of an urban policy across the city as opposed to its priority neighbourhoods.

The appropriate scale of operation can thus become contentious, and in a number of cases the relationship between region, sub-region, county, district and neighbourhood is unclear. Within the same LSP partners hold different views about the most appropriate level at which particular issues should be addressed.

1.1.6 Local context: rurality

The extent of partner engagement is in part a function of the local context. For LSPs in neighbourhood renewal areas, LNRS and management of NRF has often been a dominant concern. They have given time to extended discussions about the establishment of neighbourhood partnerships, about the balance between targeted priority areas and borough wide needs, about the interests of communities of interest as well as communities of place. Thus ‘neighbourhood’ is a major focus, and much of our report draws on neighbourhood related evidence.

At the same time there are (only) eighty seven LSPs in NRF areas, and other LSPs cover localities where there is a mixed settlement pattern – a major town with hinterland, a set of market towns, or a largely rural area. Three of the case studies began to illustrate the specific issues confronting partner engagement in rural LSPs. Rural deprivation is an issue in Herefordshire, Hampshire and Western Suffolk. It entails both targeting very small groups and overcoming geographical isolation, and the fact that only small minorities are affected can mean a lack of prominence for rural social exclusion in Community Strategies. In West Suffolk the identified rural problems include isolation and access to services and facilities; the fragile nature of the local economy and the dominance of low-wage sectors; declining market towns; housing affordability. However, the West Suffolk LSP has not yet got to the stage where it has worked out what and how it might do something about these difficult issues. Hampshire (without the unitary authorities) views itself as a strongly rural county, and for a number of district LSPs as well as for the county LSP, rural issues are a major priority, with transport accessibility the key feature. Some NRF areas, such as Easington and Tameside, also have rural issues which receive less attention because they are overshadowed by urban problems.

Rurality emerges (unsurprisingly) as an important context where issues of accessibility, affordable housing, and employment opportunities are significant. The rural context affects the process as well as the content of LSP development with, frequently, the absence of a coherent business voice, a dispersed and fragmented voluntary sector, and a number of practical problems such as the need often to travel relatively long distances to attend meetings. It is also clear that in dispersed rural areas, some of the public bodies (Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage) are loosely or selectively engaged. That such rural areas are often two-tier local government areas, with agencies faced with participating in several district LSPs and a county one, provides a partial justification for what some interviewees saw as ‘absentee partners’.

1.1.7 Local context: conclusions

The evidence, therefore, is that context matters. Central government expectations of (and in the case of the 87, the requirements from) LSPs are demanding, and in the eyes of some LSP stakeholders limit the extent of local autonomy. At the same time it is clear that there remains some confusion about precisely what LSPs are for and in this sense the national context is important but opaque. The local (regional, county, district, unitary, metropolitan or London borough) context is influential in determining both the starting capacities and experience of the LSP and the trajectory and direction of change of LSP development. LSPs are intended to shape their own role and functioning and the evidence suggests that although the influence of

central government is a dominant one, local drivers are also important, and there is great variety in the ways in which LSPs are emerging. This conclusion is buttressed by evidence from a recent survey of LSP partners conducted as part of the wider evaluation of the LGMA.⁸ This suggests that while partners in LSPs recognise the role of government in establishing LSPs, a clear majority also link the LSP to local needs and interests.

1.2 LSP STRUCTURES⁹

The structures which an LSP establishes need to be both efficient and inclusive, ‘tight’ when they need to be clear and specific, and ‘loose’ when they need to be flexible.

Most LSPs have drawn on some combination of a number of ‘building blocks’ in setting up an operational structure: a main Board, a larger Forum, an executive, theme and task groups, neighbourhood and community forums as follows:

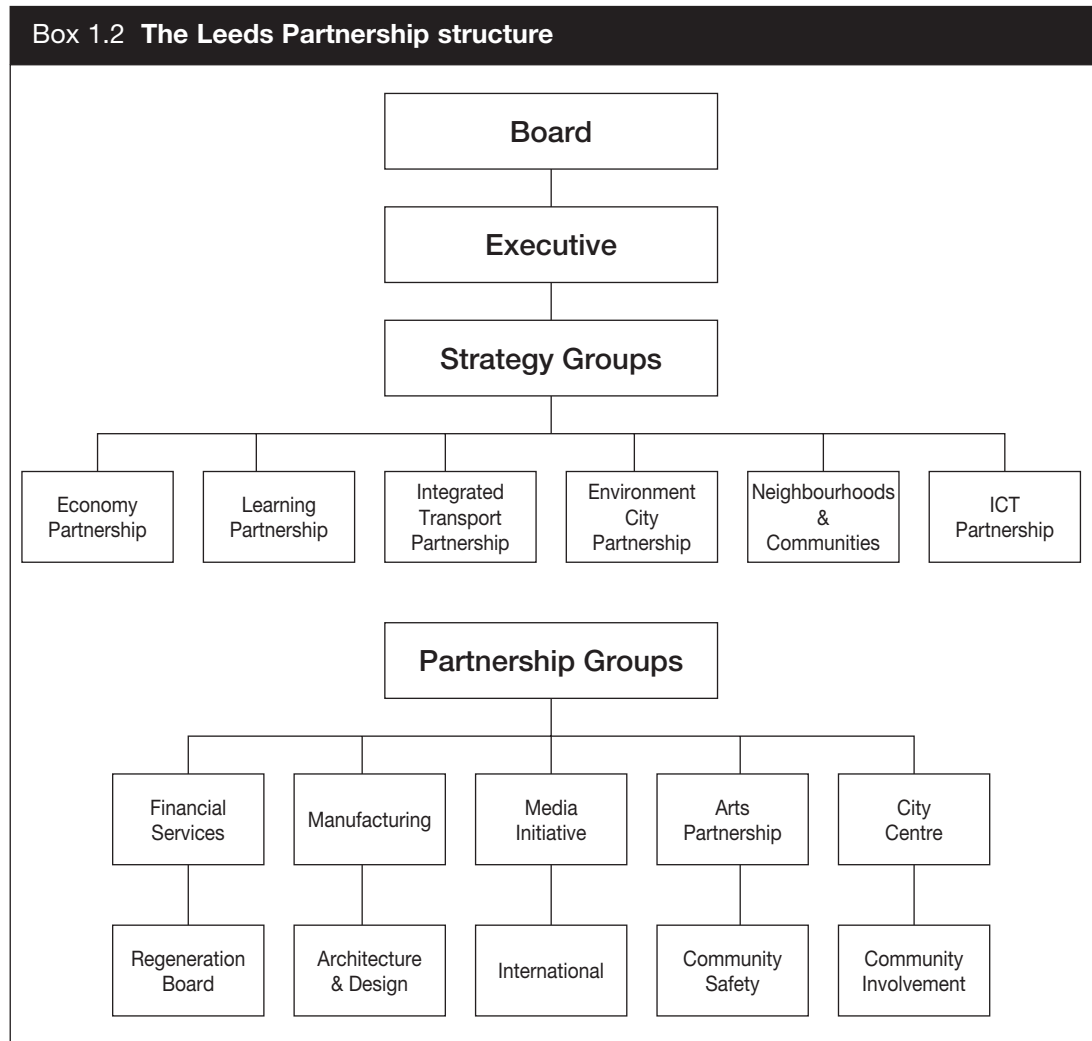
Box 1.1 Components of LSP structures

- A widely drawn **Forum** usually with open membership, meeting only once or twice a year, but drawing together a wide range of local stakeholders (often a hundred or more) to generate understanding of and legitimacy for LSP activity.
- A **Board**, varying in size but typically around two dozen, which is the formal body to which partners sign up and which through some form of constitution makes up the LSP.
- An **Executive**, smaller than the Board and made up largely of officers which fulfils the purpose either of implementing the decision of the LSP or of moving from a general but imprecise agreement made by the Board to a more explicit form of action.
- **Theme Groups**, taking forward either particular service area themes (health, community safety, for example) or cross-cutting themes (such as inclusion, sustainability, young people)
- **Task Groups** – (sometimes task and finish groups) charged with specific functions to support the LSP (e.g. programme delivery groups in LSPs with NRF responsibilities) or elsewhere communication groups, information groups.
- **Neighbourhood or Community Forums** (supported in NRF areas with CEF resources) which draw together teams of community development workers/neighbourhood officers and/or local community organisations and resident groups.

⁸ This data is from a sample survey of local authorities, including their LSP partners, undertaken by the University of Manchester as part of the evaluation of New Council Constitutions and Ethics. Over 300 partners in 39 LSPs were surveyed

⁹ This section, and sections 1.3 and 1.4, draw on a number of sources, but especially the 2002 survey and case studies

The Leeds Partnership structure, shown below, is representative of key elements in many LSP structures, although as Leeds is a big-city LSP its structure is more complex than many.



Notwithstanding these common elements of LSP structures, there is great variety in the degree of sophistication of structural arrangements. Taken as a whole NRF LSPs have more developed structures, but differences are not only between NRF and non-NRF areas. Moreover in many cases some structures are still ‘forming’. Nonetheless, while inevitably setting up the right structures was a critical issue for all LSPs in the early stages, it would seem that – in most if not all cases – these structures are now ‘bedding down’ and are not an area of immediate concern, although their robustness and flexibility still remains to be tested over time.

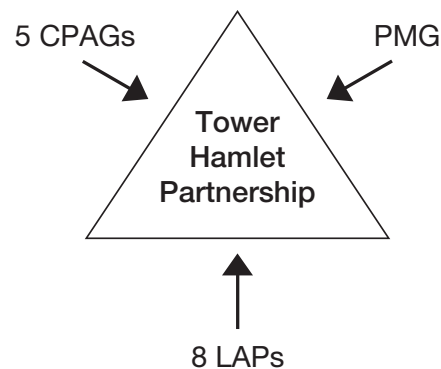
So far, however, there has been only limited success in clarifying roles, and developing robust working relationships with both the many sectoral or themed partnerships within the LSP area, or with the often even greater number of neighbourhood partnerships and area-based initiatives, although some LSP structures are interesting in this respect (Boxes 1.3 and 1.4).

Box 1.3 The Tower Hamlets Partnership

The Tower Hamlets Partnership has a structure designed to set out the importance of local community involvement to strategic action. The structure is triangular, with the three sides as follows:

1. Themed community plan action groups (CPAGs) - 5
2. Local area partnerships (LAPs) 8 - consisting of 2-3 wards per area
3. Partnership management group (PMG)

The partnership management group is not defined as the “centre” or “executive” but rather as of equal importance in partnership working as the other two sides of the triangle:



Local representation through the LAPs is organised via LAP steering groups, with a profile advised by the centre to include local politicians, faith representation, young people and local residents. Each LAP and CPAG has dedicated (although part time) support from an officer based in this team, as well as secretariat support for the PMG.

An innovative structure such as this does, however, pose challenges in making it work. Although such a structure may facilitate community engagement it does not in itself resolve the potential tension between strategic co-ordination and local involvement, nor obviate the necessity of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the various sub-structures.

Box 1.4 Tameside Strategic Partnership – Partnership Agreements

Background

Tameside Strategic Partnership (TSP) consists of a Board and eight thematic partnerships that sit beneath it. Many of these partnerships were in existence before the concept of an LSP was developed, and they had well established strategies and reporting arrangements. Tameside's first three year Community Strategy came to an end in April 2003, so the TSP decided that the community engagement process and subsequent production of a 2003-06 Strategy was a good opportunity to bring the different partnerships within the TSP together, and more clearly align it with other partnerships.

Beneath the Community Strategy, there are eight Partnership Agreements. These set out the themes which each partnership will contribute towards, together with the aims that relate to that partnership, the measures that monitor progress towards these aims, baseline information and targets where appropriate. They also set out the membership of each partnership, their terms of reference, and the main strategies produced by the partnership. The Chair of the relevant partnership and the Chair of the TSP Board sign each Agreement. Copies of the Agreements are then made publicly available on the Internet.

The measures contained within the Agreements are reported on an annual basis to all the partnerships, in Tameside's Quality of Life report. Each thematic partnership also reports to the Board on an annual basis, informing the Board about the work they have been undertaking, and plan to do in the future.

Nevertheless most case study areas lack a systematic mapping of inter-organisational relationships and of the interdependencies between the LSP and other partnership structures. Given the extent of cross-membership of boards, and the fact that many cross-cutting issues appear on the agenda of more than one partnership, we think that LSPs may find it helpful to map and develop protocols for these relationships. This will help the LSP to address key questions, such as: How does the LSP relate to regional, sub-regional, other local bodies/networks?¹⁰ Do LSP members represent the LSP when they attend other forums? Which other bodies have asked to have an LSP member on them? What are the protocols if any between the LSP and other bodies? Which bits of business go to a service partnership and which to the LSP?

1.3 LSP MEMBERSHIP

The balance of prescription and flexibility in national guidance to LSPs concerning membership seems to have permitted local discretion around a relatively robust model. In many, although, the case studies suggest, not all locations, the ambitious and strategic remit of LSPs has ensured the membership of key players.

LSP structures engage widely varying numbers of members. The 2002 survey of all LSPs demonstrated that the concept of 'membership' of a partnership is complex and open to different interpretations. For some partnerships the 'members' are the

¹⁰ The action learning set on regional and subregional relationships proposes to develop such a protocol in this area.

organisations (or other partnerships) represented, for others the term is interpreted in terms of the individuals who attend meetings; for some the concept is still being formulated. Some partnerships distinguish between an inner core (for instance the Board) and a wider membership; for some the wider membership is fixed, for others it is open to all.

There is a tension between being inclusive and fully representative while remaining strategic and focused, and LSPs are still searching for the optimum balance. Pre-existing partnerships are moving in different directions in an attempt to resolve this tension, some enlarging their membership to be more inclusive, others reducing it to become more streamlined.

The 2002 survey showed that, amongst public sector organisations, almost all LSPs include, as well as the local authority, the police/police authority and the health sector (usually the primary care trust). Further and higher education institutions and Learning and Skills Councils are also well represented. Beyond this, membership is very varied; the Employment Service, Benefits Agency or Jobcentre Plus are represented in about 60% of LSPs, as is the regional Government Office. 45% of respondents include 'other partnerships' amongst their membership (a partnership would have been included in this public sector grouping if it included a mixture of public and other sectors but was predominantly public sector). All these organisations and partnerships however, apart from the health sector and police, are represented much less frequently amongst core members.

The private sector is most commonly represented by the Chamber of Commerce or another business umbrella group; individual businesses, transport operators and other predominantly private sector partnerships are also represented in some LSPs.

Representation amongst the community and voluntary sectors is disparate. These sectors are most often represented by one or more umbrella groups (core members in 86% of LSPs which have core members), less frequently by individual voluntary or community sector organisations, although this may reflect the fact that such organisations were included under other more specific categories. Other membership includes communities of interest (for instance children's and young people's groups, faith organisations, environmental groups and BME representative organisations). Registered Social Landlords are also frequently included.

At Board, executive, and task group levels membership tends to be closed, and task and theme groups are often self defining being made up of the policy community most obviously involved. Boards can have differing categories of member - full or co-opted, permanent or temporary - and the size of the Board itself is in part a function of the other structures (sub-partnerships, theme, task groups) which exist. At forum and community level structures are often open, with meetings attended by anyone who wishes, so encouraging inclusion.

The important issues now for LSPs would appear to be not only to sustain, but to deepen the engagement of partners, especially as they move from a focus on vision and strategy to action and delivery, and to review membership. This is in recognition of the fact that some members are more active than others (to the extent the latter simply do not attend), while on the other hand there is evidence of some less predictable partners – the fire service or the Environment Agency for

example - bringing enthusiasm and commitment to LSP working. A few LSPs are also beginning to consider identifying and adding ‘missing partners’ by undertaking reviews of membership.

1.4 STAFFING AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

At the time of the 2002 survey, the majority of LSPs had no support staff of their own, including 50% of NRF LSPs. For most, support was provided by the local authority. NRF LSPs in general had access to more staff resources, but almost half of all LSPs had less than one full time equivalent staff member. NRF LSPs again had greater access to dedicated funds (in addition to NRF itself) but 72% of LSPs had no dedicated budget. Evidence from the 2001-02 statements of use of NRF indicated that £1.177k of NRF spend was on activities relating to an LSP – development work, research and analysis, mapping resources, monitoring and evaluation, facilitation, and secretariat functions. This amount to less than one per cent of NRF but nevertheless was a significant input to LSP capacity.

The level of staff support for LSPs is clearly changing as they move from a focus on vision and strategy to increasing concerns with action and delivery. All the case study LSPs have a manager, executive or co-ordinator, sometimes appointed, sometimes seconded (generally from the local authority), and sometimes with additional duties beyond support to the LSP. In the best-resourced cases, the manager also has a small staff team.

LSP staff arrangements include a number of models:

Box 1.5 Four models of LSP staffing

Lone manager. Such a single individual will tend to be isolated, unsupported, overloaded.

Single manager acting as a hub for a ring of support officers in agencies/departments. The effectiveness of this model is highly dependent on the commitment of partners. At best it can symbolise the partnership principle, at worst it can mean unreliable and variable support.

Local authority manager (sometimes with a support team). This model may often seem the most practical way to provide support, but it can signal local authority dominance of the LSP.

Permanent LSP appointed staff covering a range of activity and with mixed support from agencies. This model symbolises the autonomy of the LSP but depends on substantial partner commitment.

Support is also provided by partner contributions of time and expertise, and this can be a good indication of partner commitment and the autonomy of the LSP from the local authority. In complementary work by the HDA-led ‘round table’, the contribution of staff time to support the LSP was identified as one of the most obvious but simple ways in which partner resources could be aligned ‘to enable the effective functioning of their partnership structure’ – and to support the shift from single agency to partnership-focused planning and delivery. Examples include:

- Staff – jointly funded partnership development managers, administrators, analysts, marketing/press officers (includes secondments and new posts)
- Services to the LSP – joint funding for policy development and analysis, information and intelligence gathering, performance impact and evaluation
- Joint use of consultation mechanisms
- Shared use of venues/funding for LSP meetings, events and conferences
- Joint training for public sector staff – in areas such as community development
- Joint approach to financial bidding for external funds to create an LSP pooled budget
- Joint approach to supporting local community and voluntary sector groups writing funding bids and co-ordinating the allocation of community grants.

Nevertheless, despite dedicated staffing and/or partner in kind contributions, most LSPs appear to depend on slender resources, working under considerable pressure. While, in general, NRF LSPs have greater capacity, the workload in NRF localities is also significantly greater. One view would seem to be that LSPs need relatively limited dedicated staff, as theirs is a ‘steering not rowing’ role. It remains to be seen whether this is a workable model, or whether LSPs need more substantial dedicated staffing, even to fulfil a non-delivery role effectively. As well as the numbers of staff available to an LSP, there are related issues about the range of expertise needed by LSP staff. Some LSP staff have to work on equal terms with senior personnel from partners, and need the authority and experience to be able to promote inter-agency working. Among other necessary areas of expertise are strategic planning; project and performance management and ‘driving’ delivery, and evaluation. The evaluation suggests that the level of LSP staffing and resourcing, and how it is provided, is an issue which needs urgent consideration. This issue might, for example, be addressed through the GO-delivered Skills and Knowledge programme. But if LSPs are not adequately staffed and resourced, the danger is that they will be unable to deliver on their – and government’s – strategies and priorities.

1.5 GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Both the action learning set on governance and the case studies suggest that LSPs are using the flexibility available to them to develop a wide range of approaches to governance issues.

The governance action learning set distinguished four different modes (‘ideal types’) of LSP, each requiring different governance arrangements. Few LSPs will operate entirely in any one mode, but the balance between them varies widely. None of the modes is inherently better than any other; each can have ‘strong’ versions that work well, and ‘weak’ versions that do not work well.

The four types are:

- **Advisory:** the LSP acts as a consultation and discussion forum and often forms the basis for consensus building, but has no independent power to act. It draws its accountability and legitimacy entirely from member organisations, particularly the local authority.
- **Commissioning:** the LSP has its own staff and authority, is able to implement decisions and commission projects, and therefore has to create its own forms of accountability and legitimacy.
- **Laboratory:** the prime focus is on generating new ideas and new ways of designing local services, drawing on the combined thinking of senior managers and community leaders.
- **Community empowerment:** attention is focused on creating strong networks within the community rather than on the key public agencies.

Each mode raises different governance issues, and the right governance approach depends on the balance between the modes. This suggests a series of questions for any LSP to ask itself to help develop the right governance structures for their particular mode or modes. These include questions about purpose, membership, rules of engagement, accountability, scrutiny, roles, and outcomes, delivery and ways of working.

LSPs participating in the learning set also considered that the important aspects of partnership – building understanding and trust between very different organisations and individuals, and building consensus around shared action – could be seriously jeopardised by a huge rule-book and a bureaucratic preoccupation with paperwork, terms of reference, constitutions, legal rules and protocols. It would be wrong to embark on highly complex governance structures and rule-systems without being clear about the needs for these rules, and the right balance of rules and flexibility given the actual LSP model in use.

The work of the action learning set suggests that governance arrangements for many LSPs are still in the formative stage, and may be expected to evolve substantially during the coming period.

1.6 LEADERSHIP

The relatively loose prescription about how LSPs should operate means that leadership is both very important and, coupled with the limited resources available to LSPs, can pose serious challenges¹¹.

The case studies show that LSPs are identifying a number of necessary leadership roles (Box 1.6).

¹¹ Leadership has been identified as the subject for an Issues Paper.

Box 1.6 Four roles for LSP leaders.

- **Holding the Chair** - setting agendas, managing the business, working LSPs towards decisions, ensuring that all stakeholders can express their view
- **Committing Partners** - generating collective ownership of and commitment to the LSP from peer leaders in partner organisations, establishing accountability to the LSP through influence
- **Role Modelling** - behaving as if joint working matters, respecting diversity, modelling collaboration
- **Representation** – taking LSP business back to one’s own organisation and ensuring that others provide back up and that the organisation fulfils the LSP’s expectations of it.

The 2002 survey showed that the chair of most LSPs (over 80%) is from the local authority (normally a senior elected member) and our more recent work tends to confirm this, and also the fact that this is often expected by, and acceptable to, other partners. There are, however, LSPs where the chair is from another sector, or where the position rotates around sectoral interests. There is evidence that in a few of the LSPs involved in the research, weak or contested leadership is proving a serious drag on progress.

An Issues paper on leadership will explore these issues further.

1.7 PARTNER ENGAGEMENT¹²

The active engagement (as opposed to the formal membership) of partners is one of the primary concerns of most LSPs.

There are, in the first place, important issues about context and scale which appear to pose problems for engagement. On the one hand, some LSPs co-exist with subregional partnerships which may, in some cases, be seen to have greater legitimacy than the LSP. In two tier contexts, either districts, or the county, or both, may have difficulty engaging partners because of lack of clarity over the roles of the LSP at each level, and the number of LSPs in which partners are being asked to participate. This can mean, on the one hand, that the county LSP struggles to define a substantial role, or that districts struggle to offer a strategic perspective which will engage partners.

There are different issues about engagement concerning different categories of partner – local government, other public bodies, business, the voluntary and community sectors. Issues concerning local government are dealt with in the next section, after considerations relating to other partners.

The evaluation suggests that the position of **public sector partners** remains an ambiguous one. Representation on LSPs is widespread across a range of non-

¹² This section draws especially on the case studies, the community engagement action learning set, and our initial work on public sector body involvement in LSPs.

departmental public bodies and public agencies. Police, Primary Care Trusts, Learning and Skills Councils are central players in most case studies and in some cases provide considerable impetus. However, there remains much uncertainty about the precise role expected of public agencies in LSP working, both in agencies and amongst other LSP members. It is clear also that public bodies such as health and police face difficulties in areas where they sit on a number of LSPs, particularly with regard to funding and the expectation that as big organisations they will help support the running costs of the LSP and its infrastructure.

The national context creates a situation for many public sector partners where there is often a strong vertical reporting structure which predominates, setting targets which individual organisations regard as crucial, thus frequently pushing LSP activity to a marginal position within individual PSBs where there is no clear link between national targets and LSP activity. This situation is exacerbated by complexities created by the low level of commitment to LSPs evident in parent departments and difficulties created by the lack of coterminous boundaries in many cases. Sometimes these difficulties lead to a loss of a sense of purpose within the LSP, and to little activity beyond meetings.

The Involvement of Public Sector Bodies call-down study suggests that participation by public bodies in LSPs is patchy both in terms of numbers and types of public bodies involved in LSPs and in relation to the depth, commitment and quality of that participation. The factors involved in effective participation are both individual and organisational. The commitment of a specific *individual* to partnership working can mean that a particular PSB plays a central role in the partnership overcoming many of the organisational obstacles referred to in the interviews above. Likewise, the absence, particularly at a senior level, of individual commitment to and belief in the benefits of partnership working can act as an insurmountable barrier.

Personal relationships of trust and esteem between key actors are a critical factor in effective partnerships. Equally, high turnover of staff in key roles can stymie the growth and development of the partnership. At the *organisational* level, the demands of organisational performance and target achievement (often imposed externally), together with a number of aspects of organisational culture, combine to inhibit commitment to joint working. It is possible to “classify” the quality of participation by PSB partners into three broad categories.

Defensive participation

Those who participate “defensively” are generally new to partnership working, either within an existing or a newer LSP framework and are concerned about the resource implications of participation and the perceived threat of partnership working as a distraction from meeting key targets. The benefits that will accrue from participation are not clear to these partners and participation, therefore, is largely “defensive” and aimed at ensuring that the partner does not “lose out” by not having a presence in this new governance “space”.

Opportunistic participation

Those who participate opportunistically usually have a clear appreciation of the communication and networking advantages of LSP working. Whilst they may not

see the LSP as a core tool for meeting their strategic objectives, they are able to see and grasp benefits opportunistically. They are thus less certain about how the LSP might help to drive forward shared objectives in a more strategic senses but are, nonetheless, able to see overlaps between organisations' agendas, and feel that there are benefits to partnership working. This type of partner is often seen as taking more from the partnership than they contribute.

Active participants

Those who participate in an active way see the LSP as a truly integrated extension of their repertoire for tackling items on their own agendas, as well as those of other partners. They appreciate the benefits of collaboration and strive to extract the "collaboration advantage" which derives from synergy and joint working. Although sometimes their enthusiasm is not reciprocated by other partners, they are strongly committed to ensuring that partnership working and the LSP shape and influence the way they do business in their "home" organisations.

As LSPs move forward, it will be interesting to test out whether it is necessary to attempt to move all players into the "active" participant category. Partnerships will need to make strategic judgements about what constitutes "critical mass", or sufficient active participation, given that partnership support is a resource-intensive activity.

The future of public sector body involvement will also be influenced by the experience from new initiatives to be piloted in the coming period, including the proposals from the Innovation Forum for Local Public Service Boards, and the proposed Local Area Agreements.

Business engagement is also ambivalent. As both the case studies and the governance action learning set show, on the one hand there is genuine enthusiasm about the possibilities of a more integrated approach to a range of key issues – transportation, education and training, affordable housing are examples. There is also evident commitment to participation and in some instances to taking forward the civic agenda on behalf of the LSP.

However it is often proving difficult to engage business in LSPs, and there are limited formal representative structures to call upon. In some cases business representatives come from an organisation such as Business Link or the chamber of commerce, but in others they are senior executives from a large local or national firm. The issue of representation is linked to that of accountability. How is the business sector held to account? Because business has no automatic 'hierarchy' the issue of representation is fraught. It is hard for an individual businessman or woman to 'speak' for all other businesses. There may be tensions between the needs of large and small businesses, or even rivalry between businesses. A business could be seen to have an unfair advantage through membership of a partnership. LSPs are finding it is difficult to sustain business interest if partnership working becomes bureaucratic, if there is not a bias towards action, and if local leaders believe (rightly or wrongly) that the process is being run from Whitehall; and if LSPs appear to be quasi-public sector bodies with local government styles and cultures dominating.

It is intended to undertake survey work and write an Issues Paper on business engagement in 2004.

In relation to **voluntary and community sector** engagement, the case studies divide between two types of locality. On the one hand there are localities where there are few large voluntary organisations, where an LSP builds on pre-existing structures which are public-sector dominated, where the community sector itself finds it hard to engage strategically, and where LSP members from the community find the business of meetings intimidating. In such areas there remains much uncertainty about how best to move forward and even if the local authority tries not to take a dominant role, voluntary and community partners remain junior.

On the other hand there are localities where there has been a long history of statutory/voluntary sector engagement with extensive community involvement in regeneration and a range of ABIs. Identifying potential voluntary or community LSP members is not difficult; and capacity has already been built to reasonable levels. Many of these areas also benefit from the Community Empowerment Fund thus reinforcing already strong capacity. In some such areas, however, community groups are at best uncertain at worst suspicious of or antagonistic to what is seen as yet another initiative which may marginalise them.

In some localities such suspicion is being overcome, with CEF seeming influential in this respect. In other areas the structures established to manage CEF appear threatening to pre-existing voluntary sector power structures. Many non-NRF areas find it much more difficult to stimulate an under-developed community/voluntary sector, and in relation to community capacity building suggested that 'to them that hath shall be given'. Some case studies (West Suffolk, Hampshire, Gloucester) suggest that there would be benefits from extending capacity building resources beyond the 87 NRF oriented LSPs.

The Community Engagement action learning set identifies a number of learning points on community engagement for LSPs, which may help to overcome some of these issues (Box 1.7).

Box 1.7 Principles for community engagement in the LSP

- Clarity about aims and objectives – what inputs and outputs are expected from community involvement?
- Realism about what community involvement will bring to the partnership
- Better baseline information about local issues and priorities as a basis for dialogue.
- Recognition that the community sector is not just a delivery arm for the LSP.
- Clearer information about how the LSP works – terms of reference, structures, roles and responsibilities, good practice.
- Communication and networking – regular, targeted and above all concise information about what the partnership is doing, and more sharing of experience and learning.
- Wider involvement in, and ownership of, local or themed partnerships linked to the LSP.
- Monitoring and feedback on progress.
- Resourcing for support and training for the community sector, alongside reflection by the LSP itself on what is and is not working well.
- More delegation of control over funding, to give the sector a ring-fenced budget to spend as it saw fit.

The evaluation of the Community Participation Programmes in NRF areas has underlined (and provided much more detailed evidence for) many of our findings. The voluntary and community sector is highly diverse and therefore contains organisations with a wide range of perspectives, interests and needs. How easily and quickly a Community Empowerment Network (CEN) could be established, therefore, depended a lot on the existing voluntary and community sector infrastructure:

- the extent to which it was comprehensive or patchy;
- whether it was characterised by cohesiveness or fragmentation and conflict.

The CPP findings indicate the wide variety of approaches to CENs in terms of their:

- constitutional basis;
- membership structures – networks of networks or networks of individual groups and organisations;
- organisational structures – thematic and/or area-based;
- activities and spend.

The picture is equally varied in relation to representation on LSPs, partly because of the differences in LSP structures, in terms of:

- the number of representatives;
- the balance between voluntary sector and community sector representatives;
- the means of selection – whether elected by CEN or chosen in some other way – and whether the places are allocated by type of organisation;
- whether there are VCS representatives on the LSP from outside of the CEN.

Once at the partnership table, community representatives can feel like poor relations even if numerically they are on a par with other sectors because they think that the sector's potential contribution is not fully understood by others. Equally, they may feel ill-equipped to join in a strategic debate or find that the concerns of their 'constituency' are not reflected in the LSP's agenda possibly because the Network does not have a clear understanding of the role and purpose of an LSP. Issues can also arise over the relationship between councillors and VCS representatives.

LSPs and CENs differ in their capacity to support and train VCS representatives on the LSP and, even if capacity building is on offer, the representatives themselves are not always able to take it up. As has been the experience of other partnerships with community members, there is a danger of relatively few people being subjected to over-inflated expectations and many demands, which can lead to burn-out and a high turnover.

However, there is evidence that VCS members are taking an active part in LSPs and their wider partnership structures. They have been involved in developing the Community Strategy and in the LSP accreditation and increasingly being brought into a range of associated initiatives, such as neighbourhood renewal, community cohesion and compact development.

The evaluation also highlights a number of issues which concern the engagement of all partners:

- To ensure that community representatives on LSPs truly represent their communities, it may be necessary to establish voting systems or support mechanisms to enable them to hear from and report back to their communities. Similar issues arise in the case of business; there may be tensions within the business sector, and issues of conflict of interest. Questions of legitimacy and accountability also apply to other public agencies on LSPs, and to the voluntary sector and faith representatives.
- However, not everyone on an LSP is or should be a 'representative'. LSPs need to find ways to honour and learn from people's perspectives and experiences, without expecting them necessarily to 'speak for' whole communities. The representation of certain groups on an LSP does not absolve the LSP or the council from consulting and learning from those groups – nor does the individual have to necessarily 'carry' responsibility for reaching the wider group.

- LSP members may need support to carry out their roles well. They should be encouraged to think about their governance roles and talk about their shared responsibilities, rather than simply attend meetings.

1.8 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government is, almost inevitably, *primus inter pares* – *first among equals* - among LSP partners, and so its role and engagement is of particular importance. The local authority will be heavily engaged in the LSP (sometimes virtually the sole driver of LSP working), even where the local authority attempts to and succeeds in taking a non-dominant role, as most if not all the case study authorities claim. Experience of the issues, willingness to commit resources, democratic leadership, and the statutory community leadership responsibility all combine to reinforce the community leadership role of local government but also to emphasise the potential danger of excessive local government control. There is evidence of ambivalence not only by many local authorities themselves but also by other partners about the local government role, especially around the tension between constructive leadership and local government dominance. Thus, for example, some cases were referred to in one of the action learning sets where the LSP was said to be ‘officer driven’, but with the rider that otherwise it would not be driven at all.

A range of factors may contribute to both positive and less positive local government engagement (Box 1.8).

Box 1.8 Local government engagement

Positive local government engagement associated with:

- a stable political environment
- a strong corporate culture in local government
- well known and respected senior councillors and local government managers
- high CPA scores
- prior history of successful partnership working involving local government
- unitary status.

Less positive associations:

- other partners’ perceptions of inter- authority and/or inter-party tensions
- the possibility of the LSP being used as a vehicle for promoting alternative local government configurations
- elected members opposed to LSPs
- limited experience of and capacity to work in partnership
- high staff turnover (particularly at senior levels)
- recent change in local government control.

There are often specific tensions about the attitudes of councillors to the LSP, revolving around issues of power, representation and legitimacy (Box 1.9).

Box 1.9 Councillors and LSPs

The action learning set on governance identified a number of possible tensions around the relative legitimacy of the LSP as a decision making forum, and concerns that councillors might feel excluded, or consider the LSP to be a threat to the democratic process. There were widespread concerns about the skills and capabilities of many councillors in adapting to new roles, and their ability to work well in partnership situations, while many backbench councillors feel excluded by LSPs. Councillors already feeling excluded by the cabinet and scrutiny system might begin to feel even more excluded if now their community leadership role was eroded.

Within the action learning set there was considerable political support for LSPs, and leading councillors worked hard to ensure their success, but there were also examples of senior councillors or backbenchers believing that LSPs were a ‘total waste of time.’ A limited set of qualitative interviews with councillors was therefore undertaken in the governance action learning set LSPs to explore their attitudes to LSPs. The interviews were not sufficient in number to form a representative sample, but indicated no general suspicion of LSPs; councillors were generally supportive of LSPs and this was strongest from members on the executive. There was no discernable pattern of difference in attitude related to political party membership.

Councillors saw the LSP as strengthening the consultation process; and saw partnership as a crucial way of building support for initiatives that affected the whole area. However, councillors were afraid of losing powers to the LSP and anticipated conflict between the council and the LSP if there was ‘power creep’ towards the LSP.

In contrast to other representatives on the LSP, elected representatives have a unique role in carrying responsibility for the overall balance of governance in an area; it might be helpful to see them as ‘first among equals’. Backbench councillors may need support to help them to develop their community leadership role.

The action learning set on strategic planning also identified issues concerning the role of councillors. The development of strategy can bring to a head questions about the remit and legitimacy of the LSP in relation to that of councillors, producing a lack of political commitment to the strategic perspectives developed by the LSP.

The engagement of local government, and councillors specifically, with LSPs is thus a complex issue (and one on which the truth can be difficult to identify if there is a divergence between individuals’ real views and what they are prepared to voice). The attitude of many executive members and senior officers is one of positive and constructive engagement. But this is by no means the whole story. A tension between the council – members and officers – and the LSP is explicit in some localities, incipient in others. Some backbench councillors in particular do seem to be reserving their position, and are sometimes actively hostile to LSPs. Their

concerns reflect issues of democratic legitimacy, representation and accountability. In one perspective, at present LSPs are not a great threat - they have no teeth, inadequate resources, and can be seen as just a talking shop. But if this were to change, tensions with councillors might be expected to increase.

In many localities, these issues are now entwined with the response of the local authority to the CPA. This may be a very positive driver of local authority engagement with the LSP, but there may also be a potential for authorities to focus on service delivery issues, to the possible detriment of the LSP and wider issues of community strategy.

The second round of case study research will provide opportunity to examine issues about local authorities, councillors and LSPs in more depth.

1.9 CONCLUSION – ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND THE CAPACITY OF LSPS

The initial proposition in our theory of change is that inclusive, efficient and effective processes of negotiation and deliberation will enable LSPs to generate a shared analysis and direction. This in turn, our model suggests, requires effective organisational structures and processes. The key question with which this chapter has been concerned is the extent to which the organisational and institutional arrangements developed by LSPs provide them with the capacity to address their core purposes.

Overall, our evidence shows that LSPs are making good progress in developing their capacity. The processes involved in setting up an effective and inclusive LSP have been assisted by the balance in government guidance between prescription and freedom for local initiative and diversity.

Nevertheless, there is still a considerable distance to travel for many LSPs before they can be seen as firmly established and fit for purpose institutions. Key processes, from fuller and more inclusive engagement of a range of partners, to effective, operational performance management arrangements¹³, still need to be pressed forward, especially often in those areas where the LSP has not been able to build on a positive previous history of partnership working around strategic issues, and has had to be built 'from scratch'. Local context matters – in some localities the LSP is now very much part of the furniture, and taken for granted; in others it is still on trial. Everywhere, in both NRF and non-NRF areas, LSPs face a tension between the energy and resources which they put into these 'process' issues, and the pressures on them – mostly but not only from government – to 'deliver'.

In developing their capacity, the evaluation suggests that LSPs face a number of specific constraints and issues:

- **Staffing and resources.** It is difficult to argue that many LSPs have sufficient dedicated resources to be 'fit for purpose'. This is the case in both NRF and

¹³ Performance management is discussed in Chapter 3

non-NRF areas. While there are differing views about what would constitute adequate staffing for an LSP (in terms of numbers of staff, and their skills and roles), and the extent to which this should be a dedicated resource, at present it must be seriously doubted whether the majority of LSPs are sustainable in the sense of being able to deal effectively with the increasing volume of work in which they are engaged.

- **Sustaining, deepening and widening engagement.** This is the case with all partners, in different ways – local government, other public sector bodies, business, the community and voluntary sectors.
- **Tackling the issues of legitimacy, representation and accountability,** which are raised most acutely in respect of the attitudes of councillors but are in fact more generic.

**SETTING UP THE LSP:
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Implications for LSPs

Membership and Structures

- LSPs should keep under review the extent to which their membership is ‘fit for purpose’ in terms of knowledge, skills, and commitment.
- Consideration should be given to the level (forum, board, executive group, theme group, task force) at which partner resources can best be exploited.
- There may be ‘missing partners’ who need to be involved, and others who could be more actively engaged with LSP activity.
- Decisions on structures and membership should be linked to decisions on purpose and function, since different sorts of LSPs need different sorts of membership and structure.
- LSPs may find it helpful to produce a clear ‘interorganisational map’ which shows the relationships and linkages between the many arrangements for joint working in and around the LSP itself.

Protocols should be established setting out the procedures for handling issues which involve more than one partnership within the LSP ‘family’.

Governance

- LSPs should consider whether their governance arrangements are appropriate in the light of the mode of operation of the LSP.
- In the interests of transparency and accountability, LSPs should set out clearly their proposed arrangements for consultation, communication and reporting, and should make explicit the relationship between these arrangements and the accountability mechanisms of partner organisations.
- Attention should be given – nationally and locally - to the relationship of the LSP to the democratic accountability of the local authority, and in particular to the role of those councillors who may have little knowledge or ownership of the LSP’s activities.

Resources and Support

Partners should consider whether the LSP has sufficient resources and support, including staffing resources with the necessary skills and expertise, to cope with the diverse and challenging tasks undertaken by an LSP staff team.

Implications and recommendations for government

- ODPM and GOs should consider the ways in which resourcing and support to LSPs and to partners (both organisations and individuals) is provided nationally and/or regionally, to ensure that LSPs are adequately resourced and supported, in both NRF and non-NRF areas.
- Government overall should to recognise the need for LSPs to focus their energy and resources. The capacity of LSPs to take on further issues must be considered before decisions are made to add to their remits. Government Offices can help to ensure that the strategies and targets of RDAs and other regional and subregional bodies reflect an appropriate concern for LSPs strategic priorities.

2. Developing Strategy

If a local strategic partnership is to live up to its name, then clearly a capacity to develop effective strategic perspectives is central to its remit, as the second proposition of the theory of change suggests. This chapter summarises the findings of the evaluation in this area.

It deals with:

- The challenges which LSPs are facing in developing strategy.
- The processes which LSPs have employed in developing Community Strategies and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies.

The key research question which this chapter addresses is how successful have LSPs been to date in agreeing a common vision with partners, and developing local strategies (including Community Strategies and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies) which are shared and provide an effective basis for action?

2.1 INTRODUCTION¹⁴

In the first place, it is clear that for many LSPs, especially but not only where they are newly established bodies or required considerable adaptation from existing ones, establishing the partnership and capacity building has competed for time and attention with substantive activity, including strategy development. In these circumstances producing a Community and/or Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy was often a tentative and drawn out process, and the result was seen by some partners as too broad brush and aspirational. Much energy was given to inclusiveness and tying in a wide range of interests. Where partnerships built on previous arrangements progress was quicker, but the evidence confirms that there are few short cuts to successful partnerships and that expectations of the speed at which LSPs could develop strategic capacity may have been over ambitious.

Nonetheless, the production of both Community and LNRSs has had very positive effects in many localities. It has provided a stimulus to cross-sector multi-agency working, and in NRF areas the LNRS has been the lever at least to begin to activate the mainstream in new ways of looking at neighbourhoods. NRF strategies are moving localities away from an approach which focussed primarily on one or two small areas, and are promoting a locality-wide approach to deprivation and disadvantage.

¹⁴ This chapter draws particularly on the action learning set on strategic planning and the call-down study on Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies. The evidence from this evaluation is in more depth regarding LNRS than CS, reflecting the fact that a separate evaluation of CS is being undertaken.

2.2 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESSES

Strategic planning presents important challenges to organisations – and to partnerships. The notion of ‘strategy’ implies that the many individuals who make up an organisation can be united around the effective pursuit of a coherent goal.¹⁵

This is an even more difficult issue for a partnership such as an LSP – yet as our theory of change indicates, a crucial one if a shared sense of direction and purpose is to be achieved. Strategic planning cannot be a wholly centralised or centrally controlled activity. It must balance direction with responsiveness and flexibility, ascertain what is practicable as well as what is desirable and use the knowledge and awareness of people in key positions throughout the relevant organisations. Planning processes must be sensitive to the statutory and territorial roles of individual agencies to avoid duplication or conflict and ensure that emerging strategies can influence and/or be thoroughly embedded in existing activity.¹⁶

There are a number of approaches to strategy making, with very different assumptions about how strategy works. These include:

- the Classical rational planning approach;
- the more cautious Evolutionary approach;
- the incremental Processual approach;
- the context-sensitive Systemic approach.¹⁷

Diagram 2.1 indicates their difference and the implications of each model in relation to outcomes and processes. Each approach has different implications for issues such as strategic choice, leadership, implementation and innovation.

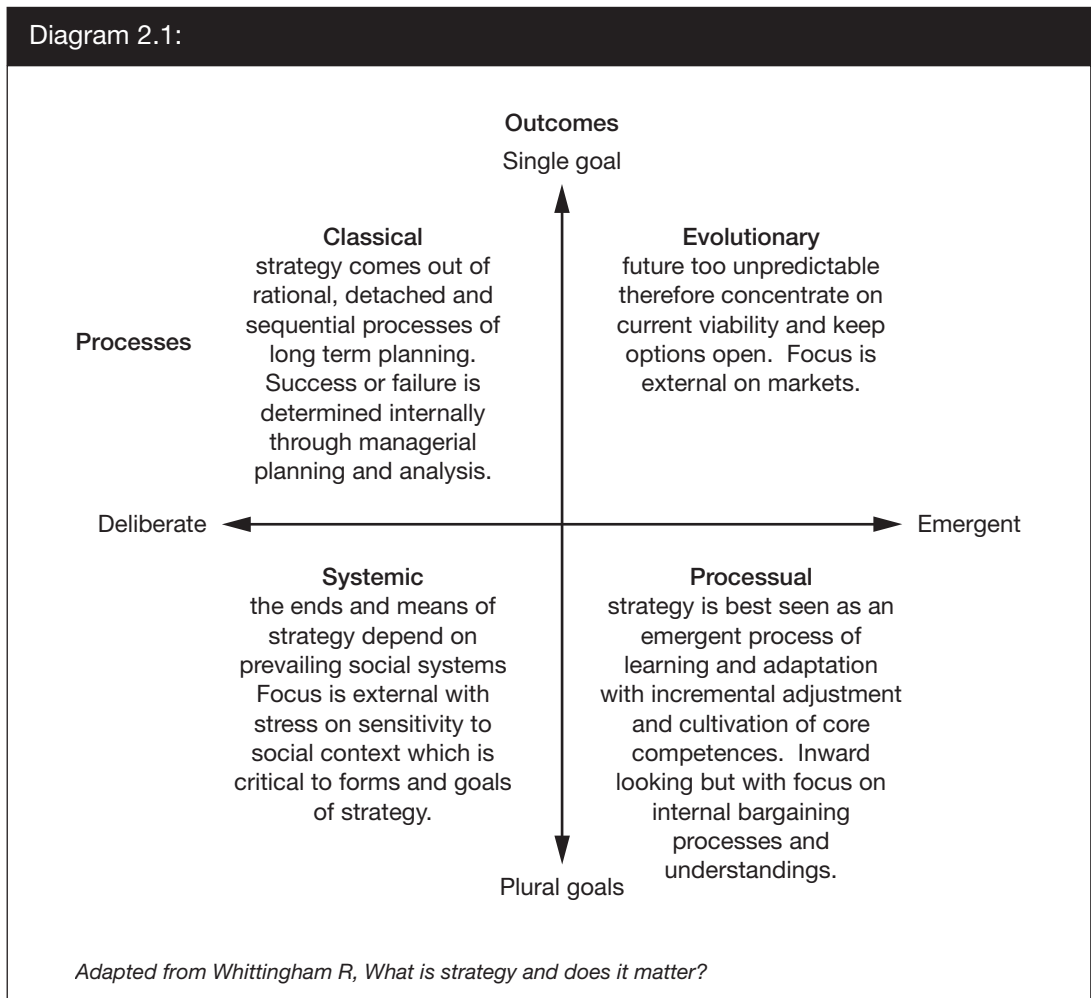
It can be argued that the systemic approach is the most relevant in the public sector, and some of our findings reflect this in relation to LSPs. For example, case study and learning set participants recognised:

- the relevance of the wide variation of powers, responsibilities and capacities across member organisations.
- the significance of the style of leadership and culture of the LSP.
- the importance of communication within the larger partner organisations as well as cultural changes and increasing partnership skills.
- the importance of understanding and responding to the distinctive character of the LSP area.

¹⁵ See Whittington, R, (1993) *What is strategy and does it matter?* London: Routledge.

¹⁶ See Russell, H, (2001) *Local Strategic Partnerships: Lessons from New Commitment to Regeneration*. Bristol: Policy Press.

¹⁷ See Whittington.



Some were taking positive steps towards developing greater breadth and sensitivity to individuals and organisations in order to encourage participation. In part, this is a matter of agenda setting for, and the style of, meetings. It also has implications for the role of the LSP co-ordinator. Strategy development is likely to require a considerable amount of behind-the-scenes debate, networking and negotiation sometimes with groups, sometimes in bi-lateral discussions with specific agencies (Box 2.1). The person concerned needs sufficient standing, knowledge and authority to exercise this role.

Box 2.1 Team roles

“Partners were involved in the process. The Board reviewed the Plan in progress and signed it off. The LSP Director played a key role in making the links between the theme partnerships as delivery vehicles for both the Community Strategy and the LNRS.” (A participant in the strategic planning action learning set).

During the process of developing strategies, determination to foster involvement and ensure consistency with partners’ - especially Councils’ - interests and priorities helped towards eventual agreement because it meant that the final document presented no surprises and already had wide ownership. The potential weakness of this approach is that it may be too risk and challenge averse. The strategy may be

too unquestioning of the *status quo* and stay at too great a level of generality. This can store up problems for later when the agenda moves from setting broad objectives to translating them into tighter priorities, actions and responsibilities and once LSPs reach a stage of calling member organisations to account for delivering targets or objectives. As one action learning set participant said, “It is difficult for anyone to object to the objectives, though there could be more dissent when it comes to prioritising them.”

2.3 CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

The development of Community Strategies has posed a number of challenges to LSPs. These include:

- *Strategy, partnership and consultation overload.* Local authorities and other organisations are required by government to produce a very large number of strategies and plans; one unitary local authority identified 85. They are also engaged in many different partnerships for different purposes. These often involve consultation exercises. This meant that the process of developing the Community Strategy could be rather top down because it was drawing on other recent strategies that had been more bottom up. The LSP, Community Strategy and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy must add value if they are to justify the effort expended on them. The real test will be if actions and resources follow the CS and LNRS. We return to these issues in the following chapters.
- *Tensions between the priorities of the LSP and those of some of the organisations that make up the LSP.* The organisational priorities of partners frequently derive from central government targets that have been passed down to the local level but do not necessarily match local priorities. This can give contradictory messages from Whitehall about the role LSPs should play.
- Similarly, there can be *tensions between what the government guidance suggests should be in the strategies, what organisations have already committed themselves to do in their existing strategies and what local people say they want* when the LSP consults. These tensions can be exemplified by the ambiguous position of Government Office representatives when they sit on LSPs, who often attend LSP strategy making sessions, officially as observers but, as representatives of government, often exerting considerable influence.
- *Lack of co-terminosity.* Not all agencies have the same geographical boundaries, and thus their strategic priorities can relate to diverging issues and interests.
- *Non-alignment of planning cycles.* Different organisations in an LSP have different planning cycles. This can make it hard to devise an overarching planning cycle for the CS and LNRS

Partners in LSPs will always find themselves facing three ways at once, towards:

- Local politicians who have been elected by local people and want to shape the agenda;

- ‘Sponsoring’ central government departments and agencies, which set standards and provide much of the money;
- Local people – the primary customer for LSP strategy making – who have their own lived experience and demands that may not match those of either local politicians or of central government.

There is nothing unusual about partnerships and even single agencies having to handle competing interests. Many of these challenges are not amenable to simple solutions. LSPs contributing to the evaluation recognise that these are tensions to be managed on an ongoing basis, not problems to be solved once and for all. Making progress requires LSPs to negotiate openly and honestly, helping partners to understand each other’s constraints and the limits on their ‘ability to trade’, exercising creativity, and lobbying collectively on behalf of the whole area with government.

Despite these difficulties, the evaluation suggests that in some localities, the processes which LSPs have followed in producing their strategies have been a positive combination of top-down drivers from central government, and local, bottom-up initiative. The permissive regime that LSPs enjoy enables them to reflect local contexts. In some localities, this has resulted in a positive coincidence of the requirement by central government for LSPs to work with local authorities to produce Community Strategies, together with local demands for overarching strategies to give a clearer focus to modernisation (‘a better sense of direction and more oomph’) and to facilitate plan rationalisation.

In some localities, the process of producing the Community Strategy has clearly been driven by the local authority, with the LSP’s role being to look at drafts, give feedback and ratify the final document. Thus one LSP in the action learning set on strategic planning said:

“When our Community Strategy was being developed, the LSP was very new and remained peripheral to the development process which was led by the Council, with little use made of LSP partners’ resources. Although the Strategy was approved by the LSP, it has not really engaged partners and it is questionable how far it reflects their views. The LSP is now working with the local authority to clarify their respective roles. The LSP will be able to ensure wider involvement in future though the Council is bound to have a major part to play because it holds much of the data required and has a large delivery function.”

In other cases, the CS was put together from other recent strategies:

“It was a matter of ‘top slicing’ other plans already rooted in consultation. The Plan development was concurrent with forming the LSP over the period Summer 1998-May 1999.”

In summary, research undertaken for the strategic planning action learning set suggests both strong and weak models of the processes through which Community Strategies were developed (Box 2.2).

Box 2.2 Strengths and weaknesses in Community Strategy development

Strong model:

- partnership owned
- inclusive: Council leadership without domination
- participative: right spirit of partnership in the task
- it provided focus and an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to partnership
- successful in keeping to tight timescale
- wide consultation
- flexibility to vary the consultation mechanisms when it was recognised that some groups were being excluded

Weak model:

- complete reliance on Council for funding, administrative support and research
- because the onus was on the local authority to produce a community strategy, other partners knew that even if they did not contribute financially, it would still get done
- limited involvement of partners
- the Strategy was not based upon a thorough interrogation of need
- it was in some parts only a catalogue of what agencies would need to do or would be doing in any case.

In moving from the development of the Community Strategy to its implementation, one important issue identified by LSPs is the need for effective linkages between LSP strategies and the regional economic strategies developed and delivered by RDAs and, often, subregional partnerships. The 2004 action learning set on regional and subregional issues will focus on this topic.

A second key issue is closer alignment with LPSAs. The first generation of PSAs were dominated by silo based national targets; even the local targets were often silo based because in the early batches partnership working had not developed to the point of enabling LAs to feel they could risk cross cutting targets. The second generation of LPSAs will be more local, and more in line with local priorities. The target choice will be evidence based and agreed with local partners. A stronger involvement is expected from partner agencies including LSPs, shire districts and PSBs. There is a recognition that the fault lines/junctures between partners offer scope for improvement. Part of this may be allowing, during the discussions between localities and CG, for PSBs to raise issues where there are conflicts between their silo performance frameworks and local priorities. What we should see is CS priorities being reflected in PSA2 agreements.

2.4 DEVELOPING THE LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL STRATEGY

This section draws particularly on the call down study of LNRSs as well as the case studies and ALSs. The call down study looked at the LNRSs that had been produced in NRF areas up to the end of 2002. Although the approaches to developing the LNRS varied greatly between LSPs, this study provides detailed evidence about the processes through which the strategies were developed, their scope and content and, thus, the capacity of LSPs (in 2002) to develop a strategic approach to neighbourhood renewal.

2.4.1 Policy drivers

The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Strategies are, in different ways, the main drivers of LNRSs. The introduction of the NRF provided an impetus for producing local strategies and, very often, they seem to draw much of their thinking about the causes of, and cures for, deprivation from the National Strategy. Community Strategies, on the other hand, provide the means of rooting the LNRS in the specific locality and also integrating neighbourhood renewal with wider aims. LSPs have a wider remit than neighbourhood renewal so that area visions in Community Strategies usually combine twin goals of economic competitiveness and social cohesion. The purpose of LNRSs is to concentrate on the latter. Yet attention still needs to be paid to the connections between these two, sometimes competing, goals. In these usually early drafts, although links are occasionally hinted at through lists of national, regional and local strategies and initiatives, there is seldom any explanation of the nature or significance of these various connections.

Apart from the thematic focuses such as Crime and Disorder Partnerships and Health Improvement Plans (HImPs), all LSPs need to nest their strategies within sub-regional and regional ones. At sub-regional level, they may be affected by the boundaries of some of their key partners such as the Police and Learning and Skills Councils. Then there are other relevant policies. About 10% of LSPs in three parts of the country fall within European Objective 1 areas. The London LSPs need to take account of what other agencies such as the Greater London Authority (GLA) and London Development Agency (LDA) are doing. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in other regions all have their regional strategies and sub-regional priorities, which also influence their deployment of resources.

The greater the level of deprivation, the greater is likely to be the number of local special initiatives relating to regeneration, with different funders and different purposes, covering different areas, operative over different timescales and driven by different partnerships. In other words, LSPs did not start from a clean sheet when devising their neighbourhood renewal strategies and there are evident difficulties in imposing a new framework on an already overcrowded picture. To some extent, pre-existing initiatives can be seen as building blocks. New Deal for Communities (NDC) Partnerships and Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders are frequently identified as test beds for approaches that can be rolled out more widely. On the other hand, an overall neighbourhood renewal strategy cannot simply comprise the sum of existing initiatives. Creating a strategy is complicated not only by socio-economic inequalities but also by disparities of investment going into different neighbourhoods. This is illustrated by NDC neighbourhoods sometimes seeming

peripheral to the LNRSs except as test beds, because it is assumed that their needs are already covered.

2.4.2 Approaches to producing neighbourhood renewal strategies

The case studies as well as the call down study showed that the NRF LSPs adopted different approaches to producing their local neighbourhood renewal strategies. In part, it depended upon the stage of development of the LSP. Where LSPs were newly established bodies or required considerable adaptation from existing ones, coping with setting up structures and processes competed for time and attention with strategy formulation. Producing a Community Strategy probably remained a rather tentative exercise. This may also account for some of them being seen by partners as too broad brush and aspirational. Leeds and Tameside, whose LSPs grew out of existing partnerships, both already had community plans before there was any formal requirement to produce them. These became the starting point for revised strategies (Box 2.3). Some focused upon their LNRS first (Box 2.4) and sometimes it seemed that this document was more significant in shaping priorities and policies than the Community Strategy. This early preoccupation with the LNRSs and, in particular, allocating NRF, could be helpful in the development of the LSP because the process of producing the strategy itself extended and strengthened partnership working. On the other hand, debates about the deployment of NRF could also be seen as a distraction from the LSP's wider strategic role.

Box 2.3 Leeds

The Leeds Initiative began in 1990 as an economic development partnership and evolved to cover many aspects of city life. It is unusual in having a well-resourced dedicated team and its own premises. At the end of the 1990s, the Leeds Initiative drew up the first city-wide strategic plan, the Vision for Leeds, a ten year sustainable development strategy. This exercise proved to be a major step towards becoming an LSP. It identified six strategic agendas and set up strategy groups for each theme though responsibility for implementation still rested with the agencies concerned.

The Leeds Initiative was clear that the development of the Community Strategy, Vision II should build upon, not reinvent Vision I even though it recognised some changes were needed. Consultants conducted an independent review of Vision I, making recommendations taken into account in the process for developing Vision II.

A draft strategy was produced following conferences, discussions, research and interviews with people representing all section of the Leeds community and events and projects with young people, older people, BME communities, voluntary and community groups, the business community and neighbourhood-based activities. The draft then went out for consultation, with an opportunity for people to respond with a freepost reply slip, by telephone or e-mail. Vision II puts more stress on ‘place’ with less reference to neighbourhoods, in order to encompass the variety of areas within Leeds including its outlying towns.

The Neighbourhoods and Communities Partnership was formed in 2000 in direct response to the need to develop a LNRS. In 2001, the first strategy established five strategic approaches to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged areas of the city and the rest. It did not go much beyond broad strategic principles with targets reflecting the government’s floor targets. Prioritising neighbourhoods continued later.

The LNRS was seen as an important tool. It is reflected in the Council’s corporate plan and there is a read across to floor targets and the LPSA, which provides some leverage. The strategic direction had yet to be translated into action. Leeds has tried to use NRF solely to bend resources. To date, only just over half the resources had been spent within the targeted areas. The rest was deployed thematically.

Box 2.4 East Durham

Easington is the fourth most deprived local authority district in England (IMD 2000), 21 out of its 26 wards are in the 10% most deprived wards. The LSP emerged out of the East Durham Task Force, which had broad membership and a wide-ranging agenda. The LSP was also able to incorporate a number of other pre-existing partnerships. Strategy formulation, including the Community Strategy and the LNRS, was one of the six tasks the LSP set for itself in addition to looking at joint working relationships, community engagement, performance management, promotion and publicity and representation and advocacy.

In its first year, it focused upon preparing the LNRS and deciding NRF spend. District Council staff took the lead in this supported by the six Implementation Groups (Health, Economy, Community Safety, Learning and Skills, Housing and Communities, Environment). Community appraisals in each ward conducted by consultants helped towards a better understanding of community wants and needs. The findings were used to inform the LNRS which was produced by the same consultants and published in July 2002.

The process of drawing up the LNRS served a number of other useful purposes. It enabled the LSP to take stock of current joint working and identify future action points by highlighting:

- the variation in the degree of joint working and information sharing between, and cross-representation on, the different Implementation Groups;
- the need for service providers to map baseline spend and refine target outcome measures;
- the need for individual service providers to inform and engage users much more in their plans and actions and for the LSP to prepare a communication strategy to raise community awareness of its purpose and goals;
- the scope for co-location of different service providers and instances where services were being delivered on a different geographical basis;
- the training requirements of service providers, residents and local groups for carrying out integrated programmes of neighbourhood renewal and service improvement.

After the LNRS, the LSP concentrated on bringing local and regional priorities and actions within an overarching framework in the Community Strategy. To a limited extent, there was a concurrent effort to increase community groups' input into strategy preparation. The six Implementation Groups drafted different sections and developed accompanying action plans. Easington District Council orchestrated the process and the LSP gave final approval.

Neighbourhood renewal can also be an issue in non-NRF areas, though on a smaller scale in extent and intensity. Questions of relative disadvantage become apparent, for example, in Gloucester's socio-economic position compared with surrounding areas. In Gloucester, which is planning a separate neighbourhood strategy, the emphasis seems to be on neighbourhood levels of service delivery as much as tackling social exclusion (Box 2.5). In Hampshire, Basingstoke is also pursuing a Neighbourhood Strategy, although without any resource from NRU, and

has undertaken a neighbourhood renewal Best Value review. Rural deprivation can feature in both NRF and non-NRF areas (Box 2.6).

Box 2.5 Gloucester

Although not an NRF area, Gloucester is relatively urban and relatively disadvantaged compared with other parts of the county, so that its priorities do not necessarily correspond with county wide ones. The LSP is seen as providing an opportunity to focus upon regeneration in a new way. The city was already pursuing neighbourhood projects and planning. An inherent issue is the lack of co-terminosity of service providers with few having an exclusive focus on Gloucester City.

The Community Strategy has dominated the LSP’s agenda for the last year. Being inclusive in developing the strategy has been a main priority, though estimates of how successful it has been vary. Consultation took place through the neighbourhood projects and CVS network, via media coverage and through a public survey conducted in the city centre. A sub-group of the LSP worked through consultation responses to inform the draft strategy. This was approved by the LSP partnership and the City Council before Easter 2003. The next stage is Action Planning. LSP members have to take the strategy into their organisations and raise awareness of it as well as making the linkages between it and their work programme. The council has been reorganised politically and organisationally to reflect the key themes of the strategy; for example, members’ portfolios complement the strategy themes. The next priority for the LSP is neighbourhood renewal.

Box 2.6 Rurality and neighbourhood renewal

Rural deprivation is an issue in Herefordshire and Western Suffolk. It entails both targeting very small groups and overcoming geographical isolation. The fact that only small minorities are affected influences the prominence that social exclusion is given in CSs. Some NRF areas, such as Easington and Tameside, also have rural issues which receive less attention because they are overshadowed by urban problems. In Tameside, the current emphasis on the neighbourhoods receiving NRF funding has prompted GONW to include ‘rural proofing’ in the issues arising out of the accreditation exercise that it wants the LSP to address.

2.4.3 Targeting in LNRs

Almost all LNRs (over 90%) targeted key geographical areas. Some remain at ward level for their targeting. Others include ‘hot spots’ outside the most deprived wards or try to focus upon ‘natural’ neighbourhoods, that is, ones that local people recognise and with which they identify. Some also seek to take into account marginal neighbourhoods or ones vulnerable to decline. Few if any strategies confront the reality that neighbourhoods may be in competition with one another. Where LNRs did not target geographically, it was because deprivation was so evenly spread across the area.

Fewer strategies targeted priority groups though they often indicated ones known to be disadvantaged. However, children and young people featured strongly in nearly

three quarters of strategies. BME groups were the focus of attention in about 60%. There are various ways in which the focus on BME groups was being developed. These included:

- BME forums
- building cross-cultural networks
- introducing capacity building measures
- ring fenced resources to support involvement
- the appointment of diversity officers
- developing codes of practice for partners
- encouraging agency diversity audits
- developing community cohesion projects
- supporting black-led initiatives

At the stage the LNRs had reached, even where groups were singled out, it could be difficult to discern how concern was to be translated into action. The targeting of groups was often more evident in relation to policy themes. About 90% of LNRs indicated some degree of focus on each of the five policy areas of the National Strategy: worklessness, health, education and skills, crime, and housing and the physical environment.

Worklessness especially is a theme that partnerships think can better be tackled across the wider geographical area. This is sometimes a matter of trying to link people within the targeted neighbourhoods with the opportunities associated with development and employment opportunities in the wider district or adjoining areas.

Health plans in many strategies are at a very early stage, but there are already diverse approaches variously focusing on:

- floor targets
- sickness rates
- health inequalities
- group-specific problems such as teenage pregnancy
- lifestyle issues
- drug and alcohol misuse
- information and advocacy

- primary and secondary health care provision
- involving PCTs in the development and implementation of LNRs

The **education and skills** theme reflects the targeting of children and young people, sometimes largely influenced by the floor targets and the goal of narrowing the attainment gap. There are also more general ambitions to raise aspirations and improve life chances. This theme clearly links with others:

- employment through the skills agenda and some forms of provision that serve a dual role, such as out-of-school clubs
- health and the provision of recreational facilities

Almost all LNRs address reducing **crime and fear of crime**, sometimes within broader themes. This is another theme with close interconnections with others; for example:

- anti-social behaviour – young people – housing management
- race crime – community cohesion
- environments in which people feel safe – estate design – housing security measures
- domestic violence, substance abuse and victim support – health

The **housing and physical environment** theme reflects the different weighting of concerns in different parts of the country. For example, the problems of low demand are apparent in the parts of the north. Overall, the issues identified are wide ranging: private sector renewal, improving quality, tenure diversification, increasing the supply of affordable housing and sheltered accommodation for groups such as elderly and disabled people, and housing management.

In addition, individual strategies identify further themes relating to, for example, quality of life, strengthening communities, and transport. Cross cutting themes are sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit. There are diverse approaches. One whole strategy is built around cross cutting themes. In others, policy themes are treated as cross cutting. More often, additional themes accompany the policy focus. Overall these are a mix of:

- values such as diversity and equity;
- underpinning principles such as community involvement and access;
- ways of working such as joined up services;
- policy dimensions such as environmental quality.

2.4.4 Information base

LNRSS vary in the breadth and depth of their evidence base. Most contain very little reference to the wider socio-economic context or discussion of why certain neighbourhoods experience persistent disadvantage. In part, this may be because the strategies were written primarily for people already ‘in the know’. In addition, the focus on evidence as a basis for targeting means there is an emphasis upon measurement at the expense of other forms of analysis that could have informed the strategies, such as exploring the dynamics and causes of deprivation. Where strategies do contain more qualitative analysis, this helps towards making clearer links between the problems and their proposed solutions.

Most LNRSS use some level of evidence to identify needs and inform the allocation of resources. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2000 is the main tool for identifying priority wards, sometimes combined with other data to pinpoint deprivation more precisely. However, trend data are largely absent and many strategies acknowledge that more work is needed to match data collection to the designated priority areas especially where these are smaller neighbourhoods or span ward boundaries. LNRSS also draw on primary data, though it can be difficult to determine the validity or reliability of findings because details of the size of surveys or scale of consultation are seldom given.

Evidence on themes varies widely in terms of sources, depth, range and quality. Data for some policy areas are easier to access than others and, as above, are not necessarily available at appropriate spatial levels. Some partnerships also draw on qualitative data from consultations and surveys on the range, accessibility and quality of services as well as residents’ priority concerns.

The absence of baselines and action plans meant it was too soon to tell how far the strategies would be SMART in their target setting. The targets used were most often floor targets, whether or not linked with stretched LPSAs or other locally devised targets.

Over 50% of the strategies contain no service data for agency expenditure and more than half of the rest could supply it only in part, either for certain agencies or particular neighbourhoods. All encountered the problem of going beyond per capita estimates of service spend and obtaining information at the right spatial level. There is a potential for double counting where there is partnership working with multi-sourced funding packages. Inconsistencies in financial monitoring procedures can also make it more difficult to disentangle funding strands. The LNRSS include little resource mapping. Exercises have sometimes been undertaken in specific neighbourhoods with different approaches being adopted in different places, but all of them encountered some difficulty.

2.4.5 Strategic integration

It is clear that horizontal and vertical strategy integration is important for both CSs and LNRSS. Both sorts of strategy were prepared within complex policy contexts and needed to take account of other strategies both at different levels of decision making – national, regional, sub-regional and neighbourhood – and across all policy

areas and partner organisations. The LNRS study and the case studies underlined the challenge of achieving this integration:

- Attaining real strategic development rather than merely chronicling what is already happening.
- Rooting the strategy in different policy areas whilst avoiding silo thinking. The process of aggregating / sifting / combining partners' or agencies' priorities is difficult and time consuming. The difficulties are greater when partners' areas of coverage are not co-terminous.
- Establishing appropriate partnership structures that do not reinforce compartmentalism. It is clear in the way that some strategies have shifted towards themes such as 'a healthy community' that they are seeking to lift the thinking out of single agency boxes and encourage 'joining up'. This shift in turn has to be reflected in their wider partnership structures and participation mechanisms so that, for example, in Tameside some rationalisation has taken place in the composition of the partnerships below the LSP.
- Using community consultation to strengthen an outcome focused approach. Using community perspectives as themes rather than service perspectives points to the need to marry bottom up and top down approaches. There can be tensions when, for example, community priorities are not borne out by statistical analysis.
- Developing an information base without it becoming a recipe for delay and over-complexity.
- Ensuring that partner organisations' own plans reflect the CS/LNRS priorities and that they can deliver the required targets.

2.4.6 Structures and processes

The structures and processes being used to develop and deliver LNRSs are critical to their effectiveness. Almost everywhere the LNRS was produced by the LSP, although arrangements varied widely. Direct supervision for the formative work was often delegated to other groups within or alongside wider LSP structures.

The LNRSs themselves do not always reveal the precise processes of strategy making. It was clear from other strands of our research that, in some cases, the local authority took a strong lead. Most LSPs have a fairly slender resource base for taking strategy development forward. (This is an important aspect of the concerns we raise in Chapter 1 about the staff resources available to LSPs.) They are therefore reliant upon partner contributions of time and expertise. Most often – especially where the LSP has no independent team – the local authority takes a major role. This was probably particularly the case in relation to the LNRSs when the work of interpreting the NSNR policy themes in terms of local circumstances was led or orchestrated by the Council and the LSP gave the final approval. The local authority's attitude and capacity is therefore very significant (Box 2.7 and Box 2.4 East Durham above).

Box 2.7 Tameside

The CPA assessment indicated Tameside’s “very strong corporate governance arrangements underpinned by effective political and managerial leadership ... The council has developed strong partnerships over a number of years and provided strong leadership in the development of a community strategy. The views of the community and a wide range of partners have shaped this. Monitoring against this strategy is well established and continues to be refined to focus upon the key quality of life indicators across the borough”.

However, LSPs themselves sometimes set up sub-groups as a means of integrating neighbourhood renewal in the wider concerns of the LSP (see Box 2.3 Leeds above). There are also indications that some LSPs are seeking to connect neighbourhood renewal with developing forms of devolved governance such as community forums, area committees or area partnerships.

Joint agency structures increasingly exist at a strategic level with the LSP becoming a ‘family of partnerships’. How far this is yet translating into multi-agency implementation teams is more difficult to discern although some partnerships are developing neighbourhood level action teams.

Some LSPs were establishing their own new community engagement structures, but most were using or building on the existing voluntary and community sector infrastructure and/or local authority community development structures. Neighbourhood management was starting to be used as the foundation for engagement. It was sometimes hard to know how far LSPs are moving from community consultation to participation especially as these strategies were mainly written at an early stage in the use of Community Empowerment Fund for building participation structures and mechanisms.

LSPs have a range of ways of engaging specific groups of stakeholders and some recognise the need to adapt the means of communication and engagement to different audiences and put in place specific measures to reach certain groups. Some groups are singled out for special focus: young people and BME groups. Far fewer strategies mention engaging businesses.

Most LNRSSs reviewed were at an early stage in producing a learning plan. However, it is evident that, whilst diverse approaches are being adopted, these will span many functions:

- encouraging and extending participation;
- meeting the learning needs in the community and amongst practitioners;
- providing routes to individual advancement through providing or accrediting skills and knowledge;
- undertaking specific skills development in relation to neighbourhood renewal;

- capacity building both in voluntary and community sector organisations and public agencies;
- bringing together and disseminating best practice.

LNRSS recognise the importance of monitoring and evaluation but on the whole arrangements are still embryonic. Again, a range of approaches and tools are cited:

- frameworks for comparing performance against national targets;
- development of joint indicators;
- data warehouses;
- longitudinal studies;
- regular household surveys;
- use of models such the European Foundation for Quality Management model to assess the LSP performance or the ‘Prove It’ model to measure the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people;
- externally commissioned research or appointment of research and evaluation staff to co-ordinate data collection and analysis.

Although LSPs have responsibility for the LNRSSs, lines of accountability are generally under-developed, both between partners and the LSP and between the LSP and the community at large.

2.4.7 LNRSS requirements

The call-down work on LNRSSs concluded by identifying for LSPs a set of requirements for a strong and comprehensive LNRSS (Box 2.8)

Box 2.8 Requirements of a strong and comprehensive LNRS

The production of a strong and comprehensive local neighbourhood renewal strategy requires:

- an analysis of the factors affecting deprivation, including those external to the neighbourhoods themselves arising from the wider social, economic and policy contexts;
- clear linkages between the identification of need, strategic ambitions, actions, targets and outcomes;
- firm strategic underpinning for what otherwise risks being a list of existing initiatives and planned approaches;
- progress from special initiatives to mainstreaming in the form of more joint working, new ways of delivering services taking into account the needs of target areas and groups and more pooling of budgets;
- the use of NRF to facilitate changes in mainstream activity;
- the developing of baselines, targets and performance indicators to allow the measurement of change and impact;
- the development of an infrastructure for delivery: identifying how actions will be delivered, how that delivery will be co-ordinated, monitored and evaluated and how the responsible bodies will be accountable to the LSP;
- attention to the necessary supportive functions such as structures for community and stakeholder engagements; capacity building within agencies and the community; mechanisms for gathering, sharing and reviewing data and intelligence; learning plans; monitoring and evaluation systems.

2.5 CONCLUSION: LSPS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Like the rest of the report, this chapter combines findings from different strands of the evaluation. To some extent it shows the different weight of evidence on the different propositions we are seeking to explore. The call down work on LNRSs has meant that we have more detail on the content of the early versions at least of these strategies than we do on a comparable number of Community Strategies. Although this enabled us to draw some conclusions about the analytic underpinning of LNRSs and where they fit within the range of other strategies that LSPs need to take into account, it was inevitable that a documentary review would tell us less about the process of strategy formation and how the various LSP partners perceived this process. The case studies and action learning sets, on the other hand, gave us more colour about processes and perceptions from across a range of LSPs.

Theoretical propositions 1 and 2 underpinning the LSPs Theory of Change assume that “inclusive processes of negotiation and deliberation generate a shared analysis, sense of direction and capacity which unifies and adds clarity to the local governance agenda and priorities for service delivery ...”. This chapter sheds light on these propositions. It has shown that:

- The vast majority of LSPs have responded enthusiastically to the requirement to produce **Community and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies**. The more strategic approach, to neighbourhood renewal particularly, which this implies is a very positive development.
- The development of LNRSSs was initially driven by the need to access the NRF, and the early strategies were very **varied in quality**. Some LSPs have developed the capacity to produce strong and effective strategies, but many LNRSSs fell between being strategic and being action oriented. A significant proportion of strategies contained little or no discussion of lead agencies or delivery mechanisms, sometimes reflecting an over-dominant local authority role.
- Community Strategy building has in general moved more slowly, especially in two tier areas, where establishing the relationship between county and district LSPs has taken time and resources. In some locations strategies reflect a positive combination of top-down drivers from central government and local, bottom up initiative, but where Community Strategies were developed as a compilation of existing strategies, it can be difficult to identify the extra dimension that the LSP adds.
- The processes of partnership building and strategy formation are intertwined, but strategic capacity presupposes a certain level of progress in developing the partnership arrangements and building trust amongst members. In developing strategy, however, few LSPs so far have drawn upon the wider literature and experience of strategic alliances and collaborative strategy, or explored alternative models of strategic planning. Strategic analysis emphasises the need for LSPs to recognise and be sensitive to their institutional and social context if they are to maximise their relevance and levels of participation.
- Inclusive strategy making (whether for Community Strategies or LNRSSs) requires a high level of **skills and expertise** within the LSP staff team, and LSPs may need to augment their capacity and skills in this area. But it also frequently relies on substantial inputs by partner organisations, and LSPs face challenges in reconciling the remits and requirements of different stakeholders within the membership of the LSP and between the LSP and local politicians, local people and central government.
- Although the pace and scale of activity varies widely, many of the strategic issues are **common to NRF and non-NRF LSPs**. Indeed a number of non-NRF LSPs are pursuing some form of neighbourhood policy and practice, suggesting that there is potential to engage LSPs beyond NRF areas in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.
- There are potential tensions for LSPs in developing strategy between **cross-cutting, thematic issues** and the **single-issue planning** of partner agencies. For example, in transport a stronger relationship needs to be built between accessibility planning (involving a range of considerations in addition to transport) and Local Transport Plans (setting out the priorities of the Local Transport Authority). Similar points emerge in relation to other cross-cutting themes such as sustainability or liveability.

This chapter has underlined that reaching a joint vision and strategy is a significant achievement. Significant steps have been taken in many localities, within the framework of national policy, to move forward in this direction, by setting up structures and working processes, and developing a common sense of direction and framework for action expressed in Community and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies. Translating strategy into action brings another set of challenges. The next chapter, therefore, turns to looking at implementation.

DEVELOPING STRATEGY: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Implications for LSPs

- The requirements to produce Community and LNRSs has had very positive effects in many localities but the quality of the strategies is very varied. Some LSPs have developed the capacity to produce strong and effective strategies; others still need to augment this capacity.
- A challenge for LSPs is to find ways to balance national and local drivers and priorities; and to ensure that Community Strategies and LNRSs connect with each other, and with other key initiatives such as LPSAs.
- Another challenge for LSPs is to ensure that local public sector bodies, including the police, health, Job Centre Plus, Learning and Skills Councils, and Passenger Transport Authorities, contribute fully to the strategies of the partnership, alongside the local authority.
- There may well be scope for more LSPs in non-NRF areas to develop neighbourhood renewal strategies or initiatives.

Implications and recommendations for government

- ODPM and GOs may need to consider how best to support the strategic planning capacity of LSPs.
- The NRU with GOs should consider how non-NRF LSPs can be encouraged to contribute to the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.
- Central government departments should consider ways to ensure the full participation of local public sector bodies in, and shared accountability for, the preparation and delivery of Community and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies. For example this requirement could be included within their performance assessment frameworks and inspection regimes.

3. Action, Implementation and Delivery

This chapter addresses issues of action, implementation and delivery (Proposition 3 in the theory of change). It assesses the relationship between the strategic – often thematic – aims of LSPs and the delivery programmes of agencies, and the extent to which action planning is assisted or hindered by the existence of LSPs in two tier areas. It discusses the development of performance management systems, and addresses the central question of ‘mainstreaming’.

Key research questions: How effectively are LSPs managing the links between LSP led strategy and agency delivery? With what focus and into which policy areas are LSPs moving? Can LSPs in two tier areas develop a common focus to community issues? Does performance management offer a framework for structuring delivery? How far are LSPs successful in addressing the mainstream programme change?

3.1 INTRODUCTION¹⁸

LSPs are, of course, not direct delivery organisations. Their role, except perhaps at the margins, is to work with partners who do have delivery responsibilities, both in facilitating the ‘delivery’ of Community Strategies and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies, and in stimulating action on a range of other issues, some of which may be nationally driven (e.g. the involvement of LSPs in accessibility planning) but which may also be locally driven and require particular local responses. Additionally, LSPs have (and will have greater) indirect responsibilities in preparing and implementing LPSAs, and to promote the effectiveness of local delivery mechanisms by seeking to rationalise structures, plans and activities.

The main theme of this chapter is the extent to which LSPs, in conjunction with their strategic roles, have been able to engage in or influence action on a range of more specific issues. The extent to which this happens depends in part on their ability to identify and respond to locally specific issues, and in part on their ability to mobilise partner organisations to take action. The chapter first surveys the ways in which delivery processes are or might be given focus, the ways in which two tier working affects both strategy and delivery, and the ways in which LSPs are considering performance management systems as a way of driving delivery. The chapter then turns to what is consistently emphasised by government as the key issue – the role of LSPs in ‘mainstreaming’ – reshaping the planning and delivery of main programmes to meet the aims of Community and LNRs, with particular reference to mainstreaming issues¹⁹.

¹⁸ The chapter draws on a range of sources including the case studies, LNRS call-down, performance indicators call-down, mainstreaming and performance management action learning sets and the mainstreaming workshop.¹⁹ The chapter draws on a number of elements of the evaluation including the case studies, the mainstreaming action learning set, and the mainstreaming workshop.

¹⁹ The chapter draws on a number of elements of the evaluation including the case studies, the mainstreaming action learning set, and the mainstreaming workshop.

The relation between strategy and action should be understood as an interface. In practice many organisations derive their strategic goals from their operational capacities, others derive their operational action programmes from strategic statements; others again merge the two phases as implementation feeds back to policy and policy development feeds back again to implementation. For NRF LSPs the gap between strategy and action is a narrow one in which the establishment of neighbourhood partnerships (sometimes termed neighbourhood action partnerships) often went hand in hand (or sometimes before) the finalisation of the LNRS. Elsewhere a more linear and less pressured approach has allowed the development of Community Strategies and the subsequent introduction of business or action planning.

The LNRS call-down work suggested that - at that time - many LNRS fell between being strategic and being action oriented. 40% of LNRS had no overall action plan; only 28% clearly had one. A larger 70% had developed clear thematic action plans. Progress on neighbourhood action plans was slower (only 18% with clear plans) and in only 39% of LNRS were lead agencies identified, and in only 27% were delivery pathways specified. This reinforces the general conclusion from the call-down that

'in general, they [LSPs] have yet to determine whom will do what by when, with what resources, and for what intended outcomes'.

Our assessment of non-NRF localities would be that at the time of our case study fieldwork this conclusion held even more strongly for non NRF areas.

It will be important in the further stages of research to assess the extent to which the objectives established by LSPs in Community and LNRSs are being (or in the case of NRF have been) incorporated into the corporate plans of partner organisations, and thereafter into annual budget or programme plans, but in most cases this would not have occurred before the financial year 2003/04. Our understanding of strategy development in NRF areas is that putting the delivery structure in place remains a major challenge in many areas. At the time of the fieldwork, a significant proportion of strategies contained little or no discussion of lead agencies or delivery mechanisms. Some assumed that the relevant agencies would deliver on floor targets. Others referred to pilot approaches such as neighbourhood management as potential ways of proceeding²⁰.

At the time of the case study fieldwork (early Spring 2003) the emphasis remained largely on strategy. Community strategies were beginning to firm up, but Delivery Plans were limited. In NRF areas, programmes making use of NRF were developed and specific agencies – local authority, public sector, voluntary organisations – carried (contractual) obligations for delivery. Since then, more community strategies have identified actions which are to be taken, and in many cases targets for activities and outcomes have been set. In this interim report we have not examined delivery plans or actions since there was little evidence of their existence at that stage. Most LSPs were still engaged in building structural arrangements (see

²⁰ Examination of the role of LSPs in influencing NRF expenditure and delivery activity did not form a core element part of the initial case study fieldwork, nor of the NRS call down. Some relevant material has emerged, however, from the relevant case studies and from some of the learning sets

Chapters 1 and 2). It is our intention in the case study areas to look more closely at delivery in the second stage of fieldwork (autumn 2004).

We have, however, identified and examined four factors which appear likely to influence action and delivery. These are:

- The relationship between strategic planning and functional delivery
- Collaboration or division of labour in two tier working
- Performance management
- The realignment and reshaping of main programmes

3.2 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FUNCTIONAL DELIVERY

Where Local Neighbourhood Renewal and/or Community Strategies mention specific actions, these are often where activities/programmes are already in existence and where they are being brought together under the umbrella of an existing partnership (e.g. crime and disorder, economic development, regeneration, health). In these cases it can be hard to identify the extra dimension which the LSP brings and, where a strong family of sub-partnerships exist, delivery/action often lies within the plans and programmes of those organisations which operate at that sub-partnership level rather than at the level of the LSP itself.

3.2.1 Crime and Disorder

The clearest illustration of the role of sub-partnerships lies in Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, established by statute, engaging and jointly led by local authorities and police, and initiating and supporting a wide range of community safety activities through both main programmes and special initiatives²¹. In the public bodies call down work, one interviewee said

‘The LSP has not really added much to the already successful Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. It worries me that the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships will become a sub-group of the LSP, because if it becomes subservient to the LSP, their service delivery could potentially suffer. I say “If it ain’t broke don’t fix it”

Two examples (described more fully in the mainstreaming workshop report) illustrate the interaction between a neighbourhood initiative, a Crime and Disorder Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership. They also illustrate the difficulty of distinguishing the added value of the LSP involvement from that of the Crime and Disorder Partnership and the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

²¹ The Derby Partnership’s review of funding streams, for example, identified nineteen funding streams coming from the Home office into the city

Box 3.1 Kirklees

In **Kirklees** the SWEET Project tackles problems faced by women in the sex industry. Multi-agency involvement and changes in service delivery have brought:

- A fast-track drugs service;
- Police referral direct to project on arrest;
- A counselling service;
- GP outreach service;
- Information sharing protocols.

There has been core funding for some elements of the project and the service has been extended into other parts of Kirklees. There are discussions about extending the police register of ‘dodgy punters’ nationwide, and lessons about working with vulnerable young people are due to be incorporated in an amendment to Child Protection legislation.

The Kirklees Community Safety Partnership is the driving force behind the project; although there is support from a wide range of other services and agencies. The LSP has provided independent support for the project, acting as an honest broker, raising the profile of the project in the partnership, and communicating the existence of the project and what it is achieving and what it aims to achieve. The Neighbourhood Renewal Team drives forward the action.

Box 3.2 Wolverhampton

In **Wolverhampton**, in response to the identified need to tackle prostitution in the area, the New Deal for Communities scheme has funded a police post which supports an anti-vice team. This post has been matched by four further officers redeployed from existing resources. With the Home Office Crime Fighting Team, comprising 12 constables and a sergeant, this means the New Deal area has extensive additional policing largely as a consequence of main programme bending. Prostitution was not originally in the City Crime Reduction and Community Safety Strategy.

Following work with NDC, resulting in the creation of a police team to tackle vice, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has established a prostitution task group.

The Wolverhampton LSP manager sees the LSP as an important vehicle through which NDC can challenge and secure commitment from agencies. The Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership, operating under the umbrella of the LSP, is a particularly important vehicle for this purpose and for the exchange of good practice between the neighbourhood management pilots (of which the New Deal for Communities is recognised as one).

In these examples the interaction of neighbourhood renewal, CDRP and LSP have led to an innovation which has subsequently been spread into the mainstream. Equally, however, there are quite different examples where it has been possible to achieve service improvements without any formal agreement between partners. In

one locality a reduction in accidents (which happened to be a key LPSA target) was achieved through useful work on improving streets and the environment together with traffic reduction without any police involvement.

3.2.2 Economic development

Discussion in the mainstreaming workshop about the relationship between thematic issues and delivery agencies identified a similar position with respect to economic development. This is an action area for a number of LSPs, especially perhaps where the LSP has developed out of a prior economic development partnership. The links between LSP thinking and strategic economic development remains unclear to many LSPs, and whilst some are engaged with regeneration zone/area investment or priority growth strategies led by RDAs, others remain uncertain about the RDA role, particularly where economic development and labour market issues span LSP boundaries, and may be addressed through specific economic development partnerships or sector working parties, for example. Indeed the mainstreaming workshop contrasted the generally positive role of the Government Office with the lack of linkage to RDAs – one reason perhaps why the list of positive mainstreaming examples largely excludes economic development. It is noticeable that the majority of good examples of mainstreaming – as identified for the mainstreaming workshop, for example – focus on health and policing.

There are fewer instances of partnership working coming from the Learning and Skills Councils, Connexions, Job Centre Plus or the Small Business Service²².

3.2.3 Accessibility Planning and Transport

Both the crime and disorder and economic development issues, therefore, highlight a key issue for LSPs in determining their appropriate role in relation to both strategy and action. This is the relationship between responsibility for *the integration and co-ordination* of activities within a thematic area (such as community safety or regeneration) on the one hand, and the statutory responsibilities of the agencies established to *deliver* particular services relating to that area on the other. Nowhere has this been more evident in the research than in the field of **accessibility planning and transport**²³, although similar issues relate to a number of cross-cutting thematic issues such as sustainability or liveability.

In the initial 2002 survey in terms of activities, 7% of LSPs said they were working on developing a Local Transport Plan in 2001-2002 with a further 7% saying they would do so in 2002-03. Finally – and perhaps most significantly – when asked about their priorities, only five LSPs identified developing a Local Transport Plan as a priority, and no LSP identified it as their first priority.

Thus whilst transport issues feature strongly on the agenda of some LSPs, in the majority of cases they were initially much less visible. In some rural LSPs accessibility is recognised as one of the most intransigent issues confronting the locality and therefore the LSP. In some urban LSPs a range of transport issues are

²² The relative absence of economic and employment agencies from partnership working is also highlighted in the national evaluation of New Deal for Communities.

²³ A specific call down study on the relationship of LSPs to accessibility and transport planning has been undertaken (see Appendix 3).

high on the agenda, from new public transport links to ‘green’ transport. The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy call down report identifies a number of transport issues emerging from NRS²⁴. Later evidence – from early 2004 – suggests that transport and accessibility issues are being addressed more widely, but that much remains to be done to close a gap between the understanding and activities of LSPs and those of Local Transport Authorities.

In becoming involved in transport issues, LSPs encounter complex questions such as scale (the appropriate level at which to handle transport issues), boundaries and the question of cross-boundary issues, complexity and the representation of multiple interests, decision making on major investment issues, the tension between economic and environmental/ sustainability issues, the linkages to health and education, and the flexibility (or inflexibility) of transport funding.

The ways in which LSPs are beginning to address these issues, together with the relationship between Community Strategies, Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies and Local Transport Plans, is developed more fully in Annex 1. One important element of this relationship is the forthcoming requirement for accessibility planning. Although the responsibility for developing and producing accessibility plans will lie with Local Transport Authorities, and whilst much of the implementation of accessibility planning will relate to transport functions, a workshop held to discuss the LTA/LSP relationship concluded that it was important to make a clear distinction between accessibility planning and transport. The LSP will be interested in accessibility in terms of access to services, information (including e-information) about the availability of services, aid and advice about accessing services, and will wish to engage a number of partners in health, employment, and housing as well as transport in discussions about accessibility. Accessibility – like safety, sustainability, liveability – is an attribute of locality well being.

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) will give expression to those aspects of accessibility which are within the powers and competences of the LTA, but accessibility measures will also need to be included within plans and programmes of a number of other bodies. The evidence from the transport study suggests both that in many localities both LSPs and transport authorities are either unaware of the other’s potential contribution to local transport planning or reluctant to alter well established ways of working. It is essential that the links between local authority transport planning and wider aspects of accessibility planning become more explicit and more clear, and the Issues Paper makes a number of recommendations on this front.

3.2.4 Health

Similarly several case study LSPs recognize that the health inequalities agenda within a redefined public health is one which demands the attention of a wide range of partners. In neighbourhood renewal areas there is involvement of health authorities and PCTs in the neighbourhood strategy and in use of NRF. Elsewhere in a number of regions several key health issues – inequalities, obesity, accidents,

²⁴ The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies of Hartlepool, Wandsworth, Lambeth, Enfield, Portsmouth, Luton, Hastings, Brighton and Hove, Derby, Sandwell and Coventry all point to accessibility and transport issues as of importance.

mental health – have been explored at events where the role of the LSP in relation to health has been the focus for attention.

3.2.5 Housing

There is relatively low representation of housing interests in those LSPs covered in the project. Few have a housing-specific sub-partnership, although there is widespread interest in the issue because of its importance for neighbourhood renewal strategies, because housing market renewal is a major issue in areas of low demand, while affordable housing is a major issue in areas of high demand, and because the Sustainable Communities action programme requires an integrated approach to sustainable development supported by multi-sector partnerships bringing together key stakeholders.

3.2.6 Equalities and Community Cohesion

Neighbourhood Renewal LSPs are by definition concerned with disadvantage and although much of this relates to communities of place, there is also a concern to address the needs of communities of interest – BME communities, people with disabilities, specific age groups, and so on. Equalities and cohesion is thus an important theme, but here again there are major differences between LSPs. Some LSPs are very active on BME issues while others appear to be failing to take such issues seriously. Sometimes this is on the grounds that this is not an issue locally, but even where BME groups are only a small proportion of the population, such issues do indeed arise. The level of attention given to BME issues relates to the relative visibility of BME groups in the locality, to the history of race relations, and to the patterns of service delivery, as well as to the difficulty or success experienced in establishing representative structures for LSP membership. Strong and committed leadership together with engagement with the social cohesion agenda and pathfinder bidding/status have been important where BME issues are a priority for the LSP.

In some LSPs there are quite sophisticated arrangements for representing and engaging BME communities; in others they are largely absent. There are similar differences in the extent to which race/BME issues are high up on the LSP agenda. Targeting on BME groups was a clear focus of attention in 38% of NRS, but 40% of LNRS suggested no targeting on BMEs and where there was some focus, it was not always clear how the concern would be turned into action. Strategies identified a number of action areas – greater involvement, reducing racial tension, ensuring equal opportunities, working with BME groups to make services more accessible and tailored. Activities undertaken by the LSP or its partners (and not confined to NRF areas) included training in race awareness or similar themes, cultural and arts-related initiatives, and community-based anti-racism work. In some cases the LSP appears to be adding value by creating more synergy and ‘critical mass’ between partners’ activities.

Taking the case study experience together it appears that minority interests are perceived very much in terms of BME groups. There is no mention of disability (although in discussion of the needs of old people disability issues emerge relating to links between health and housing). Other groups remain marginal, asylum seekers and refugees for example. There appears to be no discussion of gender.

3.2.7 Generational issues

Generational issues – young children, teenagers, older people - are high profile in some LSPs, with youth being an issue which is widely agreed as crucial to the long term future of a locality as well as being an issue around which many agencies can agree to work together. Here again the corporate plans and programmes of a number of partner agencies contain elements relevant to young people, and a number of LSPs have established mini-partnerships made up of agencies concerned with youth programmes police, probation, health, education, Connexions, Sports England, housing and others. Projects with and for young people form part of many neighbourhood renewal programmes.²¹ LSPs have also been involved with the establishment of youth forums, youth assemblies and with thinking about youth representation on, or onto the partnership. In the 2002 survey, 41% of LSPs had members from Childrens' and Young People's groups. Much of the energy given to younger children may be funnelled through an Early Years Partnership, and emergence of new proposals for Childrens Trusts has engaged some LSPs but bypassed others.

3.2.8 Rural areas and sustainability

LSPs in rural areas have frequently developed a concern with issues of accessibility and rural isolation, with social exclusion, affordable housing, and employment opportunities all significant. The rural context affects the process as well as the content of LSP development with the absence (in some but not all areas) of a coherent business voice, a dispersed and fragmented voluntary sector, and a number of practical problems such as the need often to travel relatively long distances to attend meetings. In these cases the sustainability issue has also begun to emerge – a tension between economic growth and environment, a concern for the countryside, a wish to encourage sustainable tourism for example. In general, however, sustainability does not emerge as a key issue for LSPs so far, nor do Agenda 21 partnerships appear to figure strongly in the family of LSP partnerships.

3.2.9 Summing up

In summary, while LSPs have announced their interest in a range of cross-cutting thematic areas as well as specific policy areas, the focus of work varies widely. It is frequently difficult to distinguish between the activities of the many existing partnership structures relating to employment, health, education, crime and disorder, early years, for example, and any additional activities attributable to the LSP. Our case studies suggested that at that time new activity, attributable solely to the LSP, was limited.

The emphasis given to individual policy areas depends crucially on context (see Chapter 1). The nature of the LSP area can influence attitudes towards, or the ease of, collaboration, and also focus attention on local issues over which there is likely to be a shared agenda. Places will vary in terms of when their issues are 'ripe' for mainstreaming, that is, when the need for change is obvious, and the potential benefits apparent. For example,

25 This is the case in the New Deal for Communities programme.

- High and widespread levels of deprivation make it more likely that everyone sees the need to pull together to address problems and secure the necessary resources.
- It can be easier in unitary authorities that are not locked into other metropolitan districts or involved in two tier working because of the scale of the issues and because the lines of communication are shorter.
- Co-terminosity of agencies is helpful; conversely, it can be more difficult to work with regional or sub-regional organisations. The strategic task is more challenging when partners work at different spatial levels.

Finally LSPs have begun to recognise the importance of activity on communication and influence (and to some extent marketing the image of the LSP). Communication has so far been about establishing identity and presence, but for more established LSPs has evolved into a concern for representation and advocacy in other forums – at county level for district LSPs, at regional level, in Whitehall. But again, whilst this representational/lobbying role on behalf of the locality is widely recognised as a justification for an LSP there is as yet little hard evidence of specific action of this kind (other than convincing the Government Offices that the LSP was developing in a positive way).

3.3 TWO-TIER RELATIONSHIPS

In a number of these policy areas, and relating to both strategy development and delivery, there are concerns that LSP working suffers as a consequence of the co-existence of county and district LSPs.

In a number of the case-studies problems arise for some organisations of multiple representation on county and district LSPs, and difficult decisions about where to invest effort. The Hampshire case study points to the

uncertain role of the voluntary sector at county level, when the main focus for action in this sector is more local. Issues of representation on both district and county LSPs can be a particular problem for small organisations such as the voluntary sector, but also for some of the key public sector agencies - Health, Police and Learning and Skills Councils, as well as regional agencies. There is some suggestion that these agencies see county-district LSPs as more explicitly hierarchical, than do local government partners, and apportion their efforts accordingly. In the East of England the Government Office has sought to facilitate links from the region to the local by convening a Regional Stakeholder group comprising agencies which lack the resource to be directly represented on all LSPs, to feed information to and from LSPs in the region.

A common complaint is that many agencies are not specifically resourced to participate in any, let alone multiple LSPs, and it is also suggested that the advice given by central government sponsor departments does not always make clear what level of participation in LSP working is expected. Difficult issues have also arisen where partner organisations with a wider territorial remit are being asked to give financial support to some LSPs in their territory, but not to others. This partly

reflects the different stages of development of LSPs between the two tiers and across counties

A range of issues may create additional challenges of developing LSPs in two-tier areas. These include defining and separating out those issues that are best dealt with at county level and those at district level, engaging partners in LSPs at different levels, developing effective joint working arrangements between districts and the county, and developing complementary approaches to community engagement and consultation.²⁶ Within a county area LSPs may be at different stages of development, potentially giving rise to concerns that one tier is seeking to pre-empt the other. Counties will typically have a greater capacity than small districts, in terms of staff and skills, as well as more substantial budgets, to support and drive forward strategic partnership work, and this capacity can be deployed in different ways. Furthermore there is the political dimension of two-tier government where county and districts may have different affiliations, making it difficult to reach agreement over key policy priorities. Relationships are also likely to be influenced by the history and legacy of previous relationships (for example, local government reorganisation), by past experience of joint working (or not) on critical local problems such as the effects of widespread economic collapse or the impacts of major growth pressure, and by contemporary developments such as the emerging regional agenda.

The regional agenda (see also Chapter 1) also exerts a strong influence on the attitudes and aspirations of the different local government tiers, but which many partners are reluctant to talk about. The prospect of regional government and reorganisation to unitary local government lurks in the background to a number of the case studies, and the development of LSPs is partly about the positioning of areas in relation to future unitaries. In Hampshire the county council sees the need to be a strong player in the regional context, but also perceives itself vulnerable to squeeze between the region and future unitaries. In West Suffolk the decision to opt for a cross district LSP, coterminous with the boundaries of some of the key public sector agencies, is justified as reflecting community identity and enabling strategic engagement across local government, police, health and education. However this decision has engendered concerns, replicating as it does the pre 1974 West Suffolk County.

In East Durham the regional agenda is perhaps an even stronger contextual influence, because more likely to happen in the relatively near future, influencing the motives of both county and district. It is difficult however to conclude that the regional agenda is influencing two-tier working on LSPs in any strongly detrimental way. In all these areas reasonably effective collaborative working has developed in spite of lurking mutual suspicion.

A number of specific challenges for two-tier LSP working – at both strategic and delivery levels - can be noted, therefore.

The first of these is **defining and separating out county and district roles**. The LGA advice on two tier working suggests that issues may be separated in a fairly clear way, “the county may be the appropriate level at which to engage other key

²⁶ Local Government Association (2002) Learning from Local Strategic Partnerships: LGA advice note on developing two-tier working. London: LGA.

public service deliverers, for example, the health service, police, learning and skills councils, Connexions service and government departments and agencies. But it may be too remote to effectively engage with local communities.....on the other hand a small district may be too small to secure the involvement of other service providers”. The implication here is that counties will major on public sector coordination and that districts will focus on community and neighbourhood. However, the case studies suggest that this separation of roles is not as clear cut in practice. Even where district LSPs (e.g. Gloucester, Basingstoke) develop a strong neighbourhood focus they aspire to and see the need to engage the key public service deliverers. Indeed all of the district tier LSPs we have investigated aspire to and succeed to different degrees in doing this. There is more evidence of overlapping engagement and simultaneous actions than of a clear separation of role, though perhaps the Hampshire example is developing in a more separate way. We are also aware of counties where an explicit decision has been made to not establish a county LSP (Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire) and for the county to work in support of the districts.

A number of organisations point to the problem of **multiple representation** on county and perhaps eight to ten district LSPs. Some therefore have adopted an ‘available if necessary’ stance to lower level LSPs. Many bodies have two tiers of relationship – the police at county level and also divisional level, Learning and Skills Councils, the voluntary sector with county wide voluntary umbrellas and also local CVSs. Determining the balance between county strategic and district strategy/delivery is difficult for all organisations.

The case studies also point to the difficulties that **overlapping engagement** can create for some agencies in terms of resourcing this engagement. An additional issue (although not apparently a problem), is dual membership of county and district councils. In Hampshire, for example, there is overlapping political membership between county and district with 34 out of 74 county councillors also being district councillors. Difficulties are compounded where other organisations are being asked to contribute differentially to LSPs in financial terms. There is also evidence of gaps in district level engagement - notably transport.

The case studies provide evidence of **effective collaborative working arrangements** which have evolved in different ways. Hampshire is a particularly interesting example in this respect. It is clear however that effective collaboration is costly for county councils, but that well-resourced support arrangements do engender significant good will and can help to overcome suspicion. There is also evidence elsewhere of somewhat separate development rather than collaboration, raising the question of whether this matters in the longer term.

In Suffolk District LSPs have sensibly taken advantage of major county-wide **consultation** exercises and have not duplicated these exercises. Elsewhere we have been told of uncoordinated consultation, with county and district community strategy consultation documents dropping through letterboxes at about the same time.

LSPs at different stages of development are an inevitable feature, but not necessarily a problem. This can be an explicit tactic in order to avoid alienating other partners, e.g. Hampshire deciding to follow rather than lead. It can also be a

useful source of experience for other partners, e.g. Suffolk leading rather than following. It can be a reflection of areas positioning themselves in relation to other – regional / regeneration – agendas, e.g. Gloucester.

Differences in capacity and how this is deployed are also evident. There is evidence that counties do have more capacity to support strategic partnership work- especially in relation to small districts, and that this needs to be deployed sensitively. Hampshire is an example of a competent, confident authority, perhaps with nothing to prove. But the point noted above about county councillor roles and dual mandates reveals how motives may be misinterpreted. Officer support and involvement seems less contentious, and more likely to be seen as helpful.

Political differences are a feature but not a major impediment. There is no evidence that LSP action in two-tier areas takes longer or is more difficult because of political difficulties. Political issues can be a source of frustration to some non-local government partners if they do surface. But there is a greater sense that partners are seeking to keep party politics out of LSPs.

3.4 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management for an LSP is the process whereby the partnership monitors and reviews its performance in order to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved. Performance management is central to the management of an LSP, and may embrace a range of activities including:

- defining indicators and targets to measure progress towards agreed objectives
- assigning responsibility for action
- gathering and analysing data on processes, inputs, outputs and outcomes
- reviewing performance, and diagnosing the reasons for good or bad performance
- holding those responsible to account
- planning for improvement
- reporting to stakeholders.

The purpose of performance management for a partnership is to improve outcomes for local people, by making sure that the partnership does what it says it is going to do and that this has the desired impact.

All LSPs need and are expected by government to have effective performance management arrangements. LSPs in areas eligible for NRF are required to demonstrate that their arrangements comply with core criteria set down by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. The NRU has developed a performance management framework (PMF) for use by LSPs eligible for NRF, but its use is not mandatory provided satisfactory alternatives are in place.

The 2002 survey, the evaluation case studies, the call-down research into PIs and the work of the performance management action learning set all suggest that most LSPs regard performance management as a very important, but complex and sometimes confusing issue.

Even back in 2002 when the survey was conducted it was clear that LSPs were beginning to turn their attention to performance management. Although only about 20% of partnerships responding to the survey mentioned developing shared data or work on PIs amongst their five most important activities in the current year – reflecting a preoccupation with the basic tasks of establishing the partnership – about 60% included one or both of these in their most important activities in 2002/3. Only 26% of respondents had not considered performance management at the time of the survey. Performance management was one of the most frequently requested topics for action research, particularly amongst NRF LSPs. Performance management also featured prominently in the list of issues and dilemmas facing LSPs. While for NRF LSPs this focus on performance management may have been driven partly by the need to meet the NRU's requirements, it is clear that recognition of the importance of performance management is much wider than this. A number of the non NRF case studies (Herefordshire, for example) are actively developing performance management systems. All the participants in our action learning set on this topic considered that development of an effective performance management system is vital for all LSPs; the set's views, findings and recommendations in relation to all the points discussed in this section can be found in their report.²⁷

There are a number of possible approaches to performance management, and a recognition that performance managing a partnership which depends on the commitment of partners is fraught with difficulties. LSPs are currently at different stages, often focussing on monitoring rather than utilisation of monitoring information to manage performance. Some are still in the process of getting partners to agree that active performance management as opposed to monitoring is a legitimate activity for the LSP.

Performance management for an LSP is very different from performance management for an organisation – more complex, and more difficult. Thus the difficulties in managing performance in an LSP derive from several sources:

- The nature of a voluntary partnership. The LSP governs by consent, and the focus has to be on leadership and securing commitment rather than command.
- The complexity of the agendas with which the LSP is concerned means that many partners have to contribute, each with their own agenda. It is difficult to agree priorities and actions. Yet without a clear strategy and action plan, performance management and improvement is impossible.
- There are often very different approaches to and understanding of performance management between the different sectors within a partnership. This can make it difficult to convince partners – especially those who do not come from formal organisations - of the value of investing in performance management.

27 Performance Management: A briefing note for LSPs

- Even at the level of performance monitoring there are problems, including the absence of reliable and valid indicators for some outcome areas, boundaries that are not co-terminus, differences in definitions and the way in which data is collected, and the resources required to collate data regularly across the partnership.
- LSPs are encouraged to focus performance management on outcomes rather than intermediate measures, but outcomes are often strongly affected by external factors, are difficult to influence, are often by their nature slow to change, and in the case of cross-cutting issues typically require an input from several partners.

Despite these difficulties, the evidence from the action learning set on performance management is that LSPs are aware of the purpose and value of performance management (Box 3.3).

Box 3.3 The value of performance management for the LSP

- Delivering continuous improvement in ways of working, through a process of diagnosis and action planning
- Focussing and setting priorities amongst the vast potential list of objectives
- Challenging and aligning individual partner priorities
- Improving decision making by providing feedback on progress with the implementation of strategy
- Demonstrating to partners the value of their participation
- Demonstrating achievements to others, including central government and the local community

In developing a performance management system, LSPs have to consider how to manage performance at three key levels:

- Delivery of outcomes on the ground – i.e. ensuring that strategies and plans are moving in the right direction and making a difference to the lives of local people
- The working of the partnership itself – i.e. the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of the partnership's internal systems, processes, and relationships
- The 'value added by the LSP' – i.e. the connection between level 1 and level 2 or the benefit that working together brings over and above what agencies would achieve working alone.

At each level, performance management requires analysis, diagnosis and action planning. Many LSPs have or are developing systems to address the first two of these components, but much less progress has been made in the assessment of added value (see chapter 4). It is possible that each of these components will be

quite different in its approach, processes and timetable. They nevertheless should be linked and inform each other.

Importantly, the framework will need to reflect the specific characteristics of the LSP – a ‘one size fits all’ approach will not work. Work undertaken in the evaluation so far suggests that there is no single ‘best’ performance management framework that is right for all LSPs, and in particular the type of regime favoured by the NRU may well not suit all. Instead, both our case study work and the action learning set emphasised that LSPs need to consider the advantages and costs of different approaches in the context of their own situation and needs.

However, while LSPs consider that their approaches to performance management need to be appropriate to local conditions, there are nonetheless certain requirements if performance management is to be effective. These include:

- Buy-in by all partners
- Agreement on the criteria against which performance is judged
- A clear strategy and action plan with objectives, targets, actions and responsibilities, and understanding of the linkages between objectives, actions and outcomes
- Adequate resourcing.

It is also the case that certain aspects of performance management appear particularly challenging for LSPs. These include:

- Instilling a performance culture
- Balancing national and local priorities
- Choosing, aligning and using indicators and targets
- Balancing support and challenge
- Influencing the mainstream.

This last issue – influencing the mainstream – lies at the heart of the rationale for LSPs, and the next section provides an extended discussion of this issue.

3.5 THE REALIGNMENT AND RESHAPING OF MAIN PROGRAMMES

3.5.1 Definitions

One of the major intended impacts of LSPs is upon the use of resources across partner organisations. Joint programmes, shared resources and pooled budgets figure strongly in government aspirations for joined up working, with LSPs expected to manage the co-ordination or integration of currently separate funding streams. There is also pressure on LSPs to ‘mainstream’, pressure expressed in a range of

ODPM /NRU guidance on neighbourhood renewal and local government modernisation, as well as in Audit Commission good practice documents. The term mainstreaming is widely, and often loosely, used, and our findings reinforce that of other research²⁸ that greater shared clarity at all levels of government and across agencies about what is meant by mainstreaming would at least focus attention on priorities. The LNRS call down work concluded that mainstreaming is rarely defined but common elements can be discerned in the way LNRS talk about it:

- Changing the way services are delivered
- Increasing the targeting of those most in need
- Bending or even totally recasting main budgets.

In practice, in the context of the policy background and of scarce resources, LSPs – and the individual organisations, policy makers and managers within them - have recognised a variety of motivations to engage with mainstreaming and joint resourcing. In summary, these include:

- Achieving better outcomes for users in general or for specific client groups
- Solving intractable problems
- Addressing issues which come together at a small area level
- Supporting innovation in service delivery
- Increasing the efficiency of resource use.

Our research in the evaluation has used two meanings which complement each other:

Strategic mainstreaming is the refocusing of mainstream programmes (and mainstream funding) onto targets which are agreed and shared by local partners, reflecting the pattern of local needs. In relation to neighbourhood renewal, mainstreaming concentrates primarily on the refocusing of programmes onto priority neighbourhoods, as reflected in the NRU's definition of mainstreaming²⁹:

- Re-shaping services to ensure they can benefit deprived areas by removing any blockages to deprived areas receiving an increased level of support
- Joining up different programmes to avoid gaps
- Developing and running policies that target the needs of deprived people or areas

28 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003a) *New Deal for Communities: The National Evaluation: Annual Report 2002-03* Research Report 7. Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. London: ODPM.
DETR (2002) *Collaboration and Co-ordination in Area Based Regeneration Initiatives*, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit/Regional Co-ordination Unit, London: DETR.

29 It also echoes in part the Audit Commission's usage which reflects a strategic view of mainstreaming as Establishing corporate policies, Re-allocating (bending) resources, Redesigning service provision, Improving public access to services.

- Learning from what works and improving the way we do things based on those lessons.

This recognises that the multiple and complex needs of the most deprived communities should be the focus of attention across agencies. The realignment of mainstream resources is equally applicable, however, to activities and services for non-deprived groups – improved countryside management, integrated tourism provision, the regeneration of market towns, for example. It should also be recognised that mainstream services outside a disadvantaged neighbourhood (i.e. city wide services, city centre services or services in adjoining neighbourhoods), may also benefit residents in deprived areas.

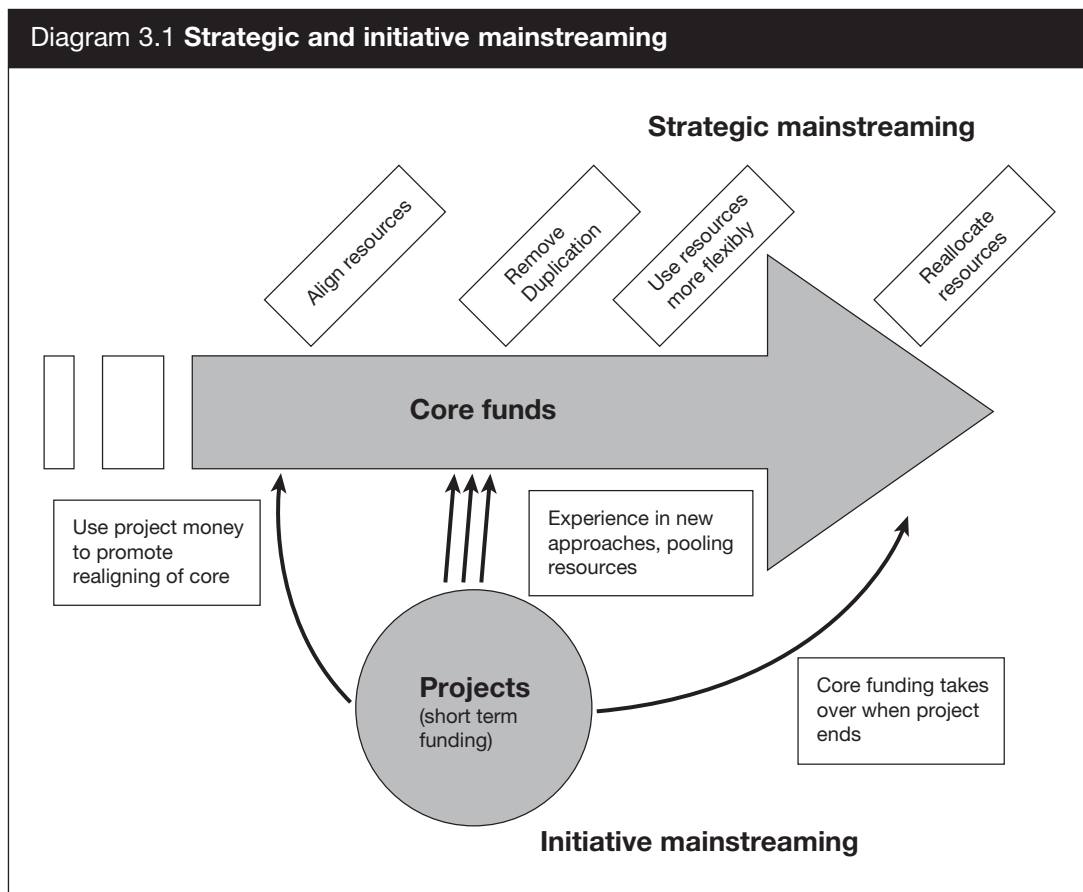
Initiative mainstreaming describes a “bottom up” approach, under which the aim is to spread approaches and learning from localised, short-term pilots, frequently on the periphery of mainstream services, to mainstream programmes; and to achieve sustainable funding for these pilots. Such pilot projects or initiatives are often funded by central government grant (or perhaps LPSA pump priming), or by mixed central and local funding, and typically involve multi-agency partnerships³⁰. This type of mainstreaming is one route to developing strategic mainstreaming.

Our interpretation of strategic and initiative mainstreaming is illustrated in the diagram below.

This illustrates how the core (or mainstream) funds of partners may be realigned by being used:

- in integrated ways to achieve synergy between separate organisational budgets or fill gaps);
- more efficiently to removing duplication between agencies;
- more flexibly to respond to user needs ;
- to re-allocate to target particular neighbourhoods of client groups.

³⁰ Although this type of mainstreaming is often thought of in terms of neighbourhood regeneration in principle it goes well beyond this – pilots can be about efficiency or general effectiveness of services. This process is about changing policy/practice on the basis of the results of an experiment.



It also illustrates the point that initiatives or projects (with short term, unsustainable, ‘funny money’ resourcing), may have three functions:

- Acting as leverage to promote realignment of the core
- Support innovation and change in the core
- Establish sustainable activities as initiatives are incorporated into the core

3.5.2 Evidence on mainstreaming

This evaluation, along with much other recent research, suggests that mainstreaming is not well established – either at local level, or equally in the perspectives and practices of many government departments. In this section we therefore highlight progress which does appear to be being made, but also highlight barriers to further progress and discuss how they might be addressed.

The mainstreaming workshop illustrated the experience of nine (relatively experienced) partnerships in addressing mainstreaming.

Table 1: Examples of Mainstreaming			
Example	What has happened?	Leading to	Future developments
Blackburn Neighbourhood Co-ordination	5 NRF funded Co-ordinators for 5 areas (pop = 30,000) to co-ordinate local services.	Multi-agency area teams including Council, Police & PCT and others	Intention to: * use to deliver other schemes; * earn from new approaches; * NM Pathfinder as mainstreaming driver
Wolverhampton Local Environmental Services	Review of local environmental services – what is being delivered, where and with what resource.	Leading to linked agendas, informing service plans Data has informed LNRS – identified lead person from NR Partnership to take it forward through a commissioning process.	Mainstream bending through City Council committing an additional £1m resource to environmental services.
Liverpool NRS	Structures being developed to deliver NR	Joint planning and agreements. Integrated structures for inter-agency action and political and community scrutiny. Skills audit across all Liverpool Partnership Group members and joint staff development. Service delivery innovation piloting actions that impact across several PSA targets	Piloting new delivery methods and rolling out successes
Stoke-on-Trent Neighbourhood Renewal	New model of NR delivery developed using Area Implementation Teams and local consultation to develop area plans and a Joint Strategy Planning Team to provide overview.	Piloted in one area	Rolling out Local Learning Plan to develop teams and partnership at the levels of Board/ Chief Officers; Joint Strategy Planning Group; Area Implementation Teams. Evaluation around an action learning framework involving all participants of NR delivery
Middlesbrough Locality-Based Public Health Nursing Teams	Review of health visiting services leading to a change in the distribution of Health Visitors to match need. LSP investing £200k NRF over 2 yrs to facilitate change	Formation of locality teams bringing HVs out of general practices into teams alongside nursery and school nurses. Reconfiguration of local authority social services to same boundaries	PCT approved full business plan including commitment to continue funding after NRF ceases. In discussion with midwifery and mental health services re integration with locality teams
Walsall – Mainstreaming the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership	Mainstream funding for Community Safety Team (3 staff) and operating costs. Walsall's was the only WM CDRP without mainstreaming funding for a core CS Team.	WBC took over part funding from NRF in 2003/4 and in full from April 2004.	Review and further negotiations re WBC taking over other CS posts currently funded from other sources and encouraging other partners to consider mainstreaming other NRF posts impacting on their service areas.
Liverpool Citysafe	Merger between CDRP and Drug Action Team with buy-in of all agencies represented in Citysafe	Co-located Team Pooled budgets 3 Joint Agency groups created around Offenders; Vulnerable Persons and Locations, each with a topsliced budget of £50k to pump prime additional activity. Various interventions and projects	Pooling resources for a central Citysafe Drug Treatment Centre Allegating an example of a Citysafe scheme mainstreamed into City Council functions.
Sheffield First – Reducing Crime in Neighbourhoods need	Tackling crime as a thread in the multi-agency NRS (<i>Closing the Gap</i>) - focus on neighbourhoods where crime is a significant problem	Anti-burglary initiatives combining targeting offenders and preventive measures Setting up local policing teams ASB initiatives	There are examples in other policy areas of Closing the Gap strategy focusing resources on neighbourhoods most in need of transformation.
Kirklees SWEET Project	Project to tackle problems faced by women in the sex industry.	Multi-agency involvement and changes in service delivery: * Fast track drugs service; * Police referral direct to project on arrest; * counselling service; * GP outreach service; * information sharing protocols.	Core funding for some elements of the project. Service extended into other parts of Kirklees. Discussions about extending Police register of 'dodgy punters' nationwide. Lessons about working with vulnerable young people due to be incorporated in an amendment to Child Protection legislation.

The evidence here is of considerable progress towards main programme change and integration. Four observations emerge.

- That the main organisation through which the LSP may drive mainstreaming are the local authority, the police and health organisations.
- That senior/middle management commitment is crucial to collaborative working.
- That neighbourhood renewal funding (and area-based initiatives in general) can be a powerful learning tool and stimulus to mainstreaming.
- That ‘locality’ planning between the level of the LSP/local authority and the neighbourhood) is fertile ground for main programme reshaping – close enough to delivery to be responsive to community; far enough above the small area to make main programme planning feasible. (This is an important finding emerging also from the evaluation of new Deal for Communities).

These are, however, examples from the leading edge of LSP development, and are not necessarily replicated across the board, where difficulties in overcoming barriers to mainstreaming are frequently more prominent.

3.5.3 Barriers to mainstreaming

There is a widespread view that barriers (to mainstreaming in general, and especially to practices such as pooling budgets which could underpin mainstreaming), stem from the limits which central government places on local discretion, and that the possibilities for using resources in different ways are limited. This view is not always justified, however, and the flexibility and permissiveness embodied in government guidance for LSPs is often genuine. Nevertheless, a number of specific barriers – central and local – were identified by the action learning set, including:

- Financial reporting regimes – the requirement for completion of government forms – which make it hard genuinely to “untag” budgets, especially education budgets. Different VAT regimes can compound this problem.
- Differences across service providers in pension arrangements (and transferability issues), human resources regimes, appraisals and salaries. The YOT experience has provided examples of these issues.
- Lack of initial data - about distribution of spending, activities and users/needs by neighbourhood – for resource mapping.

The mainstreaming workshop discussions also revealed a number of barriers – political fears about bureaucracy, the tendency to get dragged into micro issues rather than strategy, short term funding streams, the time and resources devoted to consultation, the resistance of professional groups to change, the loss of autonomy within sector specific partnerships.

Much more needs to be known about where existing resources are going in order to establish an evidence base about the pattern of resources which it is hoped to bend, to enable relative levels of access to services to be assessed, and as a basis for exploring the potential for re-allocating mainstream funding. It will be important to know how much resource is going into particular neighbourhoods, but resource mapping may be most sensibly pursued at the wider locality level, in order to enable relative levels of access to services to be assessed and as a basis for exploring the potential for re-allocating main-stream funding. This is a task which the LSP, involving all agencies and covering the whole locality, can develop and drive through, beginning to align planning, allocation and accounting mechanisms. However, there are problems confronting resource mapping - relating to technical management accounting problems of recording expenditures, to the difficulties in allocating joint costs to specific areas or activities, and to political reluctance to make explicit the fact that particular areas receive less or more than neighbouring ones. There appear to be few examples of comprehensive mapping in practice, although more progress can be made in relation to identifying patterns and levels of service delivery, although Blackburn with Darwen provides the best (the only?) example of a systematic attempt to use resource mapping as the basis for LSP working.

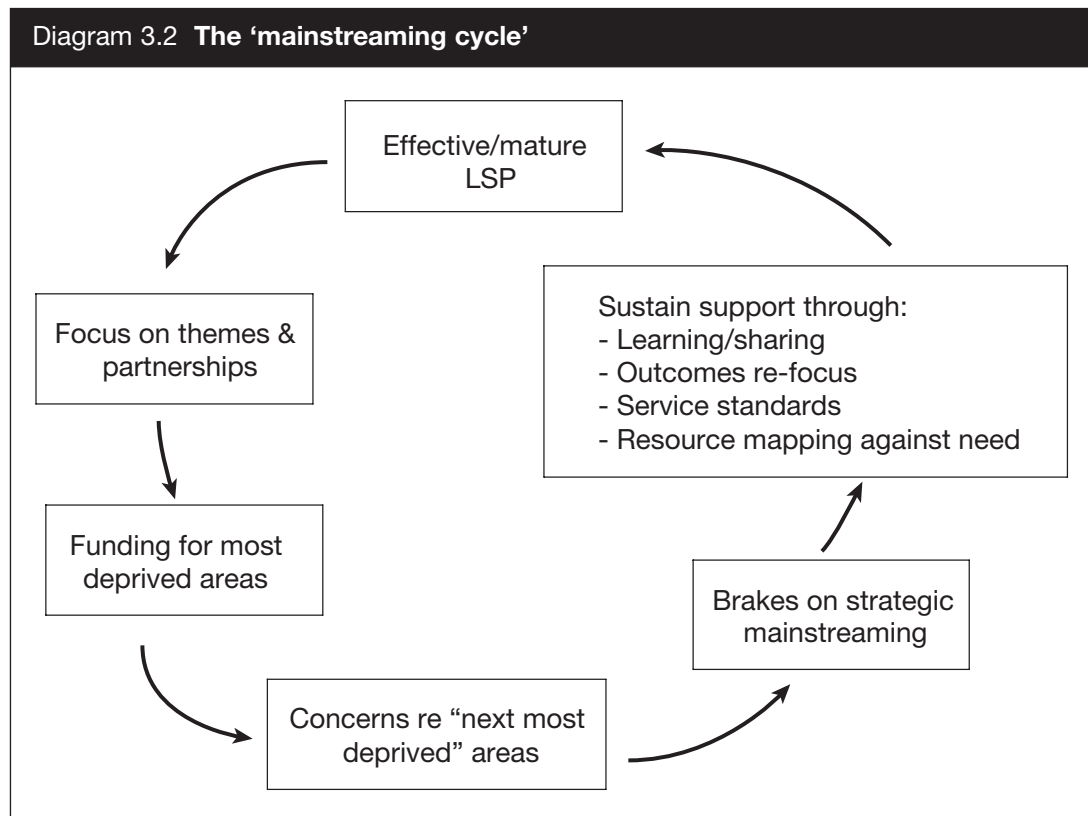
Some of these technical issues can be (and are being) worked round, but the majority of the barriers relate to organisational cultures and the perspectives of individuals at different levels in organisations, and these barriers need to be worked through. Pace is an issue: going too fast can store up problems later – if for example language is being used to mean different things. The importance of two groups in particular - elected members and middle managers - emerged from the research.

The attitudes of elected members can be particularly significant. Councils have embraced the community leadership role, but this creates pressure for “branding” so that the council can feel that it is establishing its organisational identity with local communities. This need for identity raises tensions within LSPs, and more specifically highlights the concerns of some elected councillors about the legitimacy of the LSP.

Some politicians can also be concerned about loss of control of budgets, about de-prioritising current services or about shifting the balance from universal services (such as cleansing/refuse collection) to targeted services. Rapid progress with strategic mainstreaming through LSP activity can reinforce these concerns, which may need to be addressed in localities, as illustrated in the cycle in the diagram below.

Whilst recognising the importance of addressing the role of councillors it was also clear that fertile ground for mainstreaming was reliant on ‘political maturity.’ A climate of political stability is helpful for other partners in an LSP but also maturity in this instance means councillors taking the broader and longer view, even if this is tempered by a realpolitik element. This wider view is in any case necessary for delivering, for example, on floor targets. They need to be ready to listen to the ‘business case’, as presented by officers and recognise that, although it is very important, their democratic legitimacy may rest on shaky electoral foundations. ‘Maturity’ also implies community leadership skills which additionally require

transparency in decision-making. This is not exclusively a local issue, however. The need to temper popular pressures with realism about causes and what works also applies at national government level.



An effective LSP identifies the key themes on which it wishes to focus and the structural arrangements through which it might pursue these. The special funding which becomes available for its deprived neighbourhoods/area or for specific ABIs begins to raise concerns about the other parts of the locality which do not receive such special treatment. Indeed in some areas there is evidence that the existence of an ABI such as New Deal for Communities allows agencies/local authority to divert resources from priority areas (reverse bending). The consequence is that the effective LSP must break the negative cycle and must establish and sustain a commitment to and support for mainstreaming through learning/sharing, through re-focussing on outcomes, through review of service standards, and through resource mapping.

The tensions discussed above have emerged most obviously over the relationship of Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the LSP, and in particular in relation to the fact that the effectiveness of the local authority is in part to be judged by the effectiveness of the LSP. Although it is not an issue which all members of LSPs are aware of, far less concerned with, for local authorities this is a crucial issue. An emergent issue for districts, with CPA on the horizon, is the relationship between collaborative partnership working through the LSP and improved service delivery through local government departments. With limited resources, smaller authorities may be squeezed between putting energy and resources into CPA on the one hand and working up the Community Strategy through the LSP on the other. Thus the relationship between CPA and the performance of LSPs remains an uncertain one

as does the way in which local authorities use LSPs as vehicles for articulating well-being, developing LPSAs, pursuing Best Value, and so on.

3.5.4 Catalysts to mainstreaming

Actions that will act as catalysts for strategic mainstreaming, or approaches that prove to be successful, will depend on local circumstances. The LNRS review showed that steps towards mainstreaming include:

- Auditing statutory and non-statutory plans
- Mapping resources and existing provision
- Reviewing service effectiveness
- Joining up funding streams
- Developing multi-agency teams
- Bringing players together at a neighbourhood level to look at integrated provision
- Identifying and negotiating with governmental freedoms and flexibilities to reduce restrictions on mainstream expenditure

Nevertheless, LNRSs showed *'little systematic progress although pilot schemes are underway in some areas'* and none of the strands of this research so far reveal significant progress in mainstreaming³¹. However, it is possible to draw preliminary conclusions about factors that promote main-streaming. Leadership, alignment of planning, the role of pump priming and pilots, and joint resourcing including pooling of budgets are all important.

Leadership

It is important to recognise the difference between – but also the complementary nature of – organisational and individual leadership. Organisationally, in the LSPs covered by this work, the driving agencies were variously the LSP itself, one of its strategic partnerships or sub-groups or the key organisations concerned with the relevant area of activity – often a sub-partnership established to deal with a specific policy area. For example, the fact that CDRPs provide a focus for action on community safety highlights the potential significance of the specific characteristics that they share:

- they are amongst the longer established partnerships;
- they have a statutory role;
- they are outcome driven;

31 An observation confirmed by the ODPM evaluation research on New Deal for Communities

- they are lead organisations that can see ‘what’s in it for them’;
- they are frequently pursuing additional funding;
- they have common performance issues.

Although the local authority is invariably the most important partner, vision and direction does not always have to come from that source. Where a single organisation was the main driving force, the backing of partners was always important.

It was also evident, however, that individuals had vital roles to play whether the council leader, key officers, or leaders from other organisations. Leadership is essential, but also the way it is exercised is equally important. The forms it takes will vary according to the position of the person in the organisation.

At the top level of the LSP or one of its partners, strategic leadership can include

- championing change and deciding what needs to change;
- driving change by ensuring it is cascaded to all agencies;
- having a leadership style that is inclusive, facilitates communication and engages rather than deters collaboration.

The role of individual leaders is critical to achieving the mainstreaming agenda. There is no substitute for enthusiasts in key leadership positions who are able to lead the necessary process of reflection across partners and to broker changes, or for senior level sign up across the partner organisations. Without this, there will be difficulties in achieving a genuine common vision and middle managers will pick up on lack of commitment, leading to risk aversion in relation to developing new ways of using resources. The first experience of mainstreaming will be culturally the most threatening and the hardest, and it is helpful for this to be led at top level, and to be properly resourced.

Box 3.4 Leadership in Croydon

Under the auspices of the LSP, a small steering group is leading work focusing on Northwest Croydon, an area of relative deprivation. Following a chief executives’ event, at which there was mapping of priorities and services and exchange of information, an open space event with the community took place. This open space event (*Making a difference in NW Croydon*) had a range of results – a mix of identification of strategic themes (strategic mainstreaming) and identification of smaller developments to implement on the patch.

Leadership does not however need to come exclusively from the top. Other possible catalysts for change include:

- a small critical mass in key positions to lead the required changes

- a larger critical mass lower down agencies (change champions)
- external pressure for change (such as inspectorates or community activists).
- Leadership roles and relationships are also more complex where boundaries are not co-terminous and in larger two-tier areas. In the latter case, one possibility is to use external financial incentives to identify immediate priorities across partners, in advance of development of a long-term vision.

‘Middle’ management

By contrast with strategic leadership, operational leadership is exercised at different levels within organisations. It is vital to engage and get the buy-in of the middle managers who control budgets and influence delivery on the ground. The role of middle management in different professions and the capacity to operate in different ways will vary. Middle managers may feel threatened by proposed changes and fear that these will entail sacrificing autonomy, control or visibility either in their area of management responsibility or, for people such as head teachers and GPs, in their professional territory.

The influence of central government is strong at the strategic end of the process (in establishing local strategic partnerships, in requiring plans, and in setting broad objectives). As argued above, strategic leaders have an important function in ensuring that the right messages are passed down the management line, and that procedures are in place to bring delivery. There is a major ‘implementation’ literature, however, which highlights the gap between policy and action, and the evidence from the current research reinforces the finding that it is at middle management as well as at strategic and delivery ends of the chain that blockages are to be found.

There is no simple definition of ‘middle managers’ but we are talking about programme budget holders, service level directors, heads of professional groups – those who hold resources and have some discretion in the allocation and management of financial and/or human resources. Such middle managers are typically subject to performance targets and may well have experienced resource cutbacks and/or staff shortages. They will in some instances be resistant to change and are unlikely to be rewarded for engaging in joint activities unless these directly support the achievement of departmental targets. The public bodies call down, action learning sets, and mainstreaming workshop, all confirm the findings from other research for DETR/ODPM that middle management plays a crucial role in supporting or inhibiting organisational change³². The impact of reshaping health, education, welfare or environmental services are often felt most strongly by those whose career paths are affected by the pressure to abandon their silos and move towards cross-agency and joint resourcing which may threaten their professional and managerial areas of autonomy.

The world of middle management - the processes within and between organisations, where government policies are translated into programmes - has

³² DETR (2000) Cross-cutting issues affecting local government (2000) London: DETR ODPM (2002) Collaboration and Co-ordination in Area-Based Initiatives (p.43) London:NRU/RCU.

hitherto been largely ignored, but it is to that world of main programmes and its relationship to initiatives that new learning may need to be applied. Liverpool offers an example of such learning – the investment by Liverpool Partnership stakeholders in INFUSE - a five day part-residential Common Purpose type programme of cross-sector learning to support the delivery of the NRS.³³

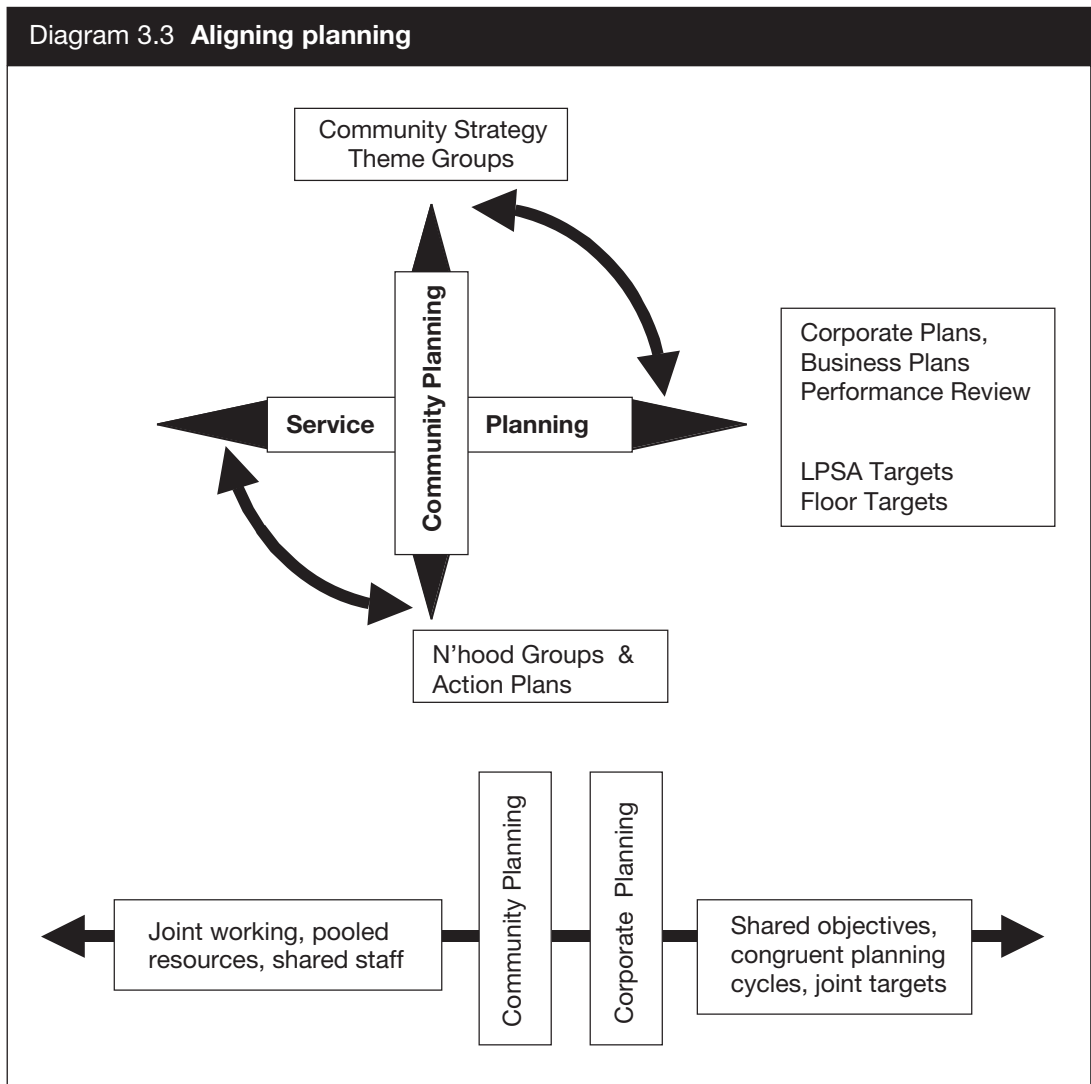
It is widely documented that senior leaders provide role models. Their attendance and contribution in partnerships affect the way in which other members approach the partnership. However, as implementers, those in middle management (as well as frontline staff) also have a key role in developing the partnership. Many argue that new skills are needed to operate across organisational and departmental boundaries including new brokerage, negotiation and facilitation skills. By analogy these skills need to be developed throughout public bodies – from the top, through the middle, to the front line - in order for main programme working to contribute effectively to the LSP.

3.5.5 Aligning planning

Many LSPs are engaged in work to align their planning processes, to enable resources to be more effectively allocated, or re-allocated, to respond to community planning priorities. Without this work, there is a risk that resources are only re-allocated at the margins, and strategic mainstreaming is not achieved.

Diagram 3.3 seeks to highlight the planning processes taking place in different areas. Localities have established a partnership planning process that implements the community strategy, typically through thematic action plans, and with links to neighbourhood action plans. At the same time, organisational planning – corporate plans and service/business plans – has been continuing much as before, focussing on performance and targets. The focus of current developments must be to improve alignment of the two strands of planning – strategic community planning and agency corporate planning, thereby reducing any duplication of activity and improving the targeting of resources. At the top this means the alignment of objectives, the sharing of targets where possible, and the development of consistency between the aspirations of the community strategy and the corporate or business plans of the partner agencies. From the bottom up this means ensuring that initiatives within neighbourhood action plans are resourced through joint and flexible arrangements linking the appropriate agencies (e.g. sharing staff, joint use of premises or equipment, shared information systems). Such alignment may involve pooling budgets, but the mainstreaming action learning set recognised that there are few if any examples of ‘pure’ pooling in contrast to the many possible arrangements of bilateral or multiple agency joint activity.

³³ The job titles of the 36 participants included Regional Planning and Partnership Manager; Assistant Divisional Officer; Neighbourhood Coordinator; Clinical Development Manager; Director of Operational Services; District Operations Manager; Service Development Manager; Regeneration (Arts) Manager; Principal Plus Developments; Assistant Team Manager; Estate Manager; Community Safety Officer; Disability Network Co-Chair; District Operations Manager; Superintendent, Operations Support; Business Development Manager; Assistant Manager; Development Manager.



Plan alignment raises a number of issues.

- How communities of need/interest are taken into account in plan alignment. There are communities with shared needs who may not be geographically clustered in specific neighbourhoods, and may not be captured either by high level thematic plan rationalisation or by bottom up integrated neighbourhood driven planning.
- The relationship between strategic 'top down' and 'bottom up' neighbourhood or initiative planning. How can different local needs be reflected in top down themes (especially where different LSP partners have differing perceptions of communities of place or interest? Has consultation and involvement built understanding and ownership about what plans mean for different groups? How does top-down planning tell a story that will engage diverse neighbourhoods and communities? There may be genuine tensions between whole locality priorities (e.g. health improvement) and the priorities of neighbourhoods (e.g. cleansing/liveability).
- Processes of plan alignment need to be able to resolve tensions and decide priorities in some way. Crucially, therefore, joint planning processes must be

able to identify those operational areas where there are likely to be conflicts and or complementarities between the programmes of partner organisations, arrive at collaborative decisions that can be translated into resource allocation and action?

Box 3.5 Flexibilities and Plan Alignment

The growth of partnership planning activities needs to be accompanied by more local flexibility about the number and style of service-related plans. ODPM announced a significant rationalisation in compulsory plans in July 2003, leaving local bodies more freedom to decide what plans they need. Most local choice about plans and formats is available to the best performing authorities in CPA terms, but this brings the risk the better authorities will have fewer plans to integrate, and that less good authorities will be inhibited from progressing the alignment of planning across all partners.

3.5.6 Bottom-up/levering change in the mainstream

The role of pump priming funding in oiling the wheels of partnership working and providing opportunities to learn about new ways of pooling resources and working together has been recognised above. Where funds are targeted at particular neighbourhoods, there can be practical challenges and opportunities in using this funding to lever strategic mainstreaming. For example:

- For various reasons of history and time/resource pressures, early NRF funding in many localities has led to an SRB-type bidding process for projects rather than a concerted attempt to reshape main programmes. This bidding culture is embedded from previous practice across the country.
- Neighbourhoods are understandably anxious for action in the short term, which can militate against the processes and time needed to engage with service managers and influence the mainstream.
- There is a need for carefully designed and planned engagement between communities (or at least community leaders and activists) and the professionals – to enable dialogue about needs and ways of meeting them.
- Neighbourhood managers can be important through their role in co-ordinating, communicating and promoting.
- Neighbourhood commissioning can help to create new markets for provision and encourage traditional providers to develop new approaches (e.g. through the Learning and Skills Councils' Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities funds).

Earlier NRU research³⁴ concluded that:

‘most ABIs represent a distraction from mainstreaming rather than a contribution to new ways of thinking about and responding to core problems in mainstream services.government – central and local - needs to make a major investment in the transfer of learning from ABIs into mainstream delivery’

Contacts with LSPs in the current project confirms the relevance of this conclusion. If targeted funds are not to have the perverse impact of delaying cultural change by enabling partners to defer addressing difficult main programme decisions, it is important that adequate mechanisms are established for ensuring that successful bottom up initiatives are sustainable, whether in the mainstream or as projects.

3.5.7 Pooling and aligning resources

Joint resourcing can be an important means of developing or implementing strategic mainstreaming. There is a spectrum of approaches to joint resourcing ranging from pooling and aligning resources in general (including people and facilities) to budgets in particular. For example, resources may be aligned or pooled through the allocation of staff to joint teams or co-location of teams, without the pooling of budgets. Pooling of budgets may be required to enable the development of integrated services or more flexible services.

Further examples are given in Box 3.6.

Box 3.6 Types of joint resourcing	
Type of joint resourcing	Examples
Aligning resources	Through planning: Co-ordination of planning across partner agencies. Targeting funding from different agencies in the same neighbourhoods Lead or joint commissioning of related services. At service delivery level: Co-location of services Front-line staff operating in a mutually-reinforcing way at neighbourhood level
Pooling non-financial resources	Time spent on partnership or inter-agency groups Information sharing Different partners providing different elements in combination to provide a service (e.g. leisure and youth services working together) Secondment of staff to projects or multi-disciplinary teams Shared use of facilities or equipment
Joint funding	Joint funded posts Jointly funded equipment stores Contributions to specific activities – with funds managed by one agency.
Pooling budgets	Health Act flexibilities – registered pooled budgets Children’s Trust pilots

The mainstreaming workshop confirmed the conclusion from the ALS that joint resourcing does not emerge as a key barrier. The LSPs involved had made use of a range of methods to assemble resources. There are still perceptions that central government is focused on “vertical” structures and processes, and that there is a lack of appropriate signals from the centre to public bodies about the need to work in a coordinated way with partners to meet local needs. However, Government has

34 ODPM (2002) Collaboration and Co-ordination in Area-Based Initiatives London: NRU/RCU

set out its intention to support local strategic partnerships and individual public sector bodies by removing where possible the barriers to pooling resources and work undertaken by the HDA national roundtable has recently drawn together a summary of the very extensive flexibilities already available to LSPs³⁵.

3.5.8 Pooled budgets

Over the last three years or so, there has been a particular focus on enabling pooled of budgets, most notably between health and local authorities using the pooled budget arrangements registered under the Health Act 2000. A pooled budget is defined as follows:

Box 3.7 Key features of pooled budgets

- Flexibility in the way funds can be used
- Shared responsibility for delivering the outcomes, including responsibility for working effectively together
- Clear responsibility for the individual budgets that fund combined activities; and
- A clear understanding of the relationship between those contributing to the budget, if necessary through written protocols or memoranda of understanding.

There are some examples of pooled budgets, (for example joint equipment stores and delayed discharges), and there is guidance on what pooling requires. A genuinely pooled budget would have the following features:

- Pooled for a clear purpose
- Joint responsibility for under/overspend
- Money pooled loses its 'tag'.

The evidence from the PSB call down and from the Mainstreaming action learning set suggests that pooling budgets is not perceived locally as easy. Interviewees talked about jointly funding certain initiatives but generally this only occurred if there was an obvious benefit for their organisation. It was evident that there are still cultural and organisational barriers to completely pooling budgets. Some of those interviewed just did not believe that their budget should be used for anything outside their own organisation and a few again questioned the legal basis on which they could do this.

'We absolutely do not pool budgets, there are no mechanisms to pool budgets. We can do it in a very limited way but not across the piece. Central government don't want this. I can't whittle my budget down to a particular ward/ locality – it would be very difficult to work my spending out to a per-head rate – so how could I fairly contribute a given amount to an initiative in a particular area.'
(Jobcentre Plus Manager)

35 This is shortly to be published as a briefing for LSPs

A few informants said they just did not have any spare resources to fund joint initiatives never mind contributing to a pool.

‘The main barrier for the PCT is budget. It is difficult to actively engage when you have no funds to contribute. We currently have a 2.5 million shortfall to make up. Once we tackle this there is the possibility that we can free up some money to put into the partnership. It’s not a question of not having the freedom we just don’t have the extra funds’. (Director of Public Health)

Others were worried about how they would account for this money and there were fears of ‘losing control’ and other organisations gaining more benefits. Nevertheless, it was argued by some that the only way to ensure effective participation from partners was to make sure everyone had a financial stake in the LSP. Others commented on the fact that although they may not currently pool budgets, the LSP and the overview they gained from it helped them with their organisation’s own financial planning:

‘We do not pool budgets. But the LSP means we are better placed to decide where to use our funds and where perhaps we need to apply for more – it allows us to identify where the gaps in provision are’. (Learning and Skills Council, Executive Director)

The full pooling of budgets would mean that new governance, management and administration arrangements would be needed – effectively creating a new public service organisation. This option – perhaps illustrated by Care Trusts - creates new boundaries with other services – and potentially new rigidities. Since the purpose of pooling is often to enable more flexible use of resources, in each case the balance of advantage of different approaches to joint resourcing needs to be considered.

The action learning set concluded that too strong an emphasis on ‘pooling’ diverts attention from the range of opportunities open to organisations to engage in joint resourcing and/or align resources. It argued that there were a number of key roles for the LSP to play.

- **Collection and pooling of information on patterns of resource use.** This is about mapping needs and current performance (including performance against targets) and is part of the process of ensuring there is shared language and understanding of issues, as a basis for setting priorities.
- **Strategic review of options for realignment of resources.** In the context of a shared vision and identified priorities for community outcomes, a strategic review of options for mainstreaming is needed. This may be supported by aligning planning processes, but in any event includes
 - identifying targets for re-allocation of mainstream resources
 - identifying what aspects of what services will need to be more integrated/flexible, and to what extent
 - identifying what types of joint resourcing are needed to support different proposed developments

- giving permission for these developments to be pursued
- **Facilitation of change**, including diagnostic consideration about partners' individual and shared capacity (e.g. leadership capacity and experience of joint resourcing), setting a realistic pace for change and identification of what will be needed to achieve the selected new ways of working in terms of
 - Culture – new forms of accountability and mutual challenge, negotiating “winners and losers” when aims are not exactly the same
 - Support and capacity building for managers and staff
- **Learning and dissemination of results across partners**
- Reconciliation of tensions between individual organisational **accountabilities** and collective responsibilities to LSP, and unblocking when tensions arise

Work undertaken in the public sector bodies call-down study highlighted how the role of the LSP in joining up resources is a function of the commitment of partner organisations to review and reshape programmes and to commit themselves to bending resources. It is possible to ‘classify’ the quality of participation by public sector body partners into three broad categories:

- **Defensive Participation:** those, generally new to partnership working, who are concerned about the resource implications of participation, and who have difficulty in finding the time, money and staff to attend meetings and perceive partnership working as a distraction from meeting key targets.
- **Opportunistic Participation:** those who have a clear appreciation of the communication and networking advantages of LSP working, and whilst not seeing the LSP as a core tool for meeting their strategic objectives they are able to see and grab benefits opportunistically. This type of partner can be seen as taking more from the partnership than they contribute and will tend to become defensive or even disengage when partnership demands exceed what they consider to be the benefits.
- **Active Participants:** those who see the LSP as an integrated extension of their capacity for tackling items on their own agendas, as well those of other partners. They are strongly committed to ensuring that partnership working and the LSP shape and influence the way that they do business in their ‘home’ organisations.

It is important to note that partners can and will engage differently at different times in the life of a partnership. A particular partner may start off as defensive and move towards active participation as he/she builds trust and experiences the benefits from the partnership. Likewise an active participant can be driven into an opportunistic or defensive way of working by, for example, growing vertical/departmental performance pressures or severe financial constraints.

These roles reflect the fact that this is a cyclical and risk management process. Localities will not achieve all potential changes first time round, rather they will

make further progress with each iteration. The pace may be slow initially, but this can be expected to accelerate as a result of spreading of experience and as partnership working becomes the ‘day job’ for managers across services.

3.6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has considered issues of action, implementation and delivery. It shows that while LSPs are becoming involved in a wide range of issues, this involvement is uneven, both between issues and between LSPs. Moreover, the movement from ‘area of interest’ to ‘area of action’ is often uncertain. LSPs are faced with what is potentially a huge agenda, and there is a danger that effort will be dissipated and ineffective because it is too widely spread given the resources available. Whilst government increasingly suggests that the LSP has a role to play in developing local responses to a range of sectoral policy initiatives, it is not always clear which issues are to be the responsibility of the LSP and which of the local authority or another agency. Government departments may, unintentionally, as part of engaging with LSPs, create additional pressures and overload.

LSPs are, therefore, only slowly progressing from strategy to implementation. Much action planning and delivery still lies (sometimes by design) at the level of thematic sub partnerships or individual partner agencies and particularly where Community Strategies were developed as a compilation of existing strategies, it can be difficult to identify the extra dimension that the LSP adds. In a number of policy/thematic areas (exemplified by accessibility and transport), the balance between LSP strategic involvement and responsible authority action for delivery is a fine one. For a number of agencies the role of the LSP remains unclear, especially when it comes to budget management and possible realignment. For LSPs the extent to which they can exercise influence over agency (or indeed local authority departmental) behaviour has not yet been established.

Mainstreaming remains a confusing term, and a lack of clarity over meaning may inhibit many organisations and agencies from engaging with main programme change. Professional, political and managerial barriers also still remain and in many localities touched by this evaluation there is at best slow progress in mainstreaming. Local authorities, police and health organisations appear most heavily engaged and there is a shortage of good practice in mainstreaming from organisations in the economic and employment sectors. There are, however, more than a few positive examples of new approaches to realigning resources – a number of which involve the development of reshaping services and resources at a meta-level between LSP and neighbourhood.

The ability of LSPs to deliver on their strategic objectives, and especially to influence mainstream services, depends on committed and strong leadership as well as on the capacity to deliver on the front line. It also depends, however, on middle management in LSP partners. Targeted funding can be used to lever change in the mainstream, but can have a perverse effect; it is important that adequate mechanisms are established for ensuring that successful bottom-up initiatives are sustainable. Pooling of budgets is just one way in which partners can align resources; the barriers to pooling are cultural and organisational rather than technical, and alternative approaches may be locally more appropriate.

Two-tier contexts pose additional problems for agencies which operate at sub-regional or county level, for whom the possibility of multiple representation on several LSPs in two-tier areas raises creates significant logistical and financial challenges. In two-tier areas county councils have more capacity to support strategic partnership work – especially in relation to small districts. This can be helpful if deployed sensitively. Though there are inevitable tensions in two tier areas (not least where the threat of reorganisation is seen as more immediate), neither differences between tiers nor political differences need represent a major impediment to LSP working.

Most LSPs regard performance management as a very important, but complex and sometimes confusing issue. Whilst for NRF LSPs progress may have been driven partly by the need to meet the NRU's requirements, it is clear that recognition of the importance of performance management is much wider than this. LSPs are currently at different stages, often focussing on monitoring rather than utilisation of monitoring information to manage performance. Some are still in the process of getting partners to agree that active performance management as opposed to monitoring is a legitimate activity for the LSP. In moving forward LSPs have to consider how to manage performance at three key levels - delivery of outcomes on the ground, the working of the partnership itself, and the 'value added by the LSP'.

ACTION, IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Implications for LSPs

- There is scope for many LSPs, subject to a clear view of their priorities and capacities, to develop their activity on a number of themes and in a number of policy areas, from accessibility and transport to equalities and from generational issues to sustainability.
- LSPs need to ensure that they play a number of roles in delivering their strategic objectives. These include
 - collection and pooling of information on patterns of resource use
 - strategic review of options for realignment of resources
 - facilitation of change reconciliation of tensions
 - monitoring and evaluation
 - learning and dissemination of results.
- The main local obstacles to mainstreaming are not technical, but cultural and organisational. Too strong an emphasis on pooling budgets can divert attention from the range of positive opportunities open to organisations to engage in joint resourcing and/or aligning resources.
- Securing the commitment of middle managements to mainstreaming will require both national and local initiative in management development and capacity building.

- LSPs should develop performance management arrangements that are appropriate to local needs, and ensure that whatever approach is taken it is integral to the operation of the LSP.

Implications for government

- Government should make clearer which issues are to be the lead responsibility of the LSP and which of the local authority or an agency. Where the LSP is expected to take a lead, government departments should address their guidance/requests for action directly to the LSP. The capacity of LSPs to take on further issues must be considered before such decisions are made.
- ODPM should give further consideration to the extent to which the performance of the LSP is, or should be, linked to the CPA performance of the local authority (or vice versa), in order to ensure that the effort put into the CPA process by local authorities augments (rather than detracts from) their commitment to the LSP.
- The role of the LSP in facilitating the alignment of resources and strategic mainstreaming must be encouraged centrally, but forcing the pace of change unduly could be counter-productive.
- In terms of addressing one of the key levels at which mainstreaming needs to be developed – middle management – national initiatives in capacity building and cross-sector management development will be important.
- The top-down imposition of pooled budgets is not regarded locally as helpful. Decisions are better taken locally about whether joint resourcing is needed and, if so, of what type.
- In two-tier areas, GOs may be best placed to advise on how and at what levels agency/public body representation on and contribution to LSP working can be most effective.
- Government Offices should also help to ensure that the targets/performance measures for RDAs include an appropriate concern with LSPs and their strategic priorities.
- The proliferation of different performance management frameworks for partners and theme partnerships (e.g. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships) can undermine the development of an agreed integrated local framework. A unified list of core requirements agreed by the relevant government departments, within which partnerships should be able to develop their own performance management arrangements, would overcome this problem.
- In the context of targets and performance measurement, and the importance of incentives and rewards (e.g. LPSA and post-CPA freedoms and flexibilities), LSP performance might be enhanced if it was clear whether and what rewards might stem from good performance.

4. Adding Value Towards Outcomes

This chapter presents early findings from the evaluation on the contribution and added value of LSPs to outcomes in terms of improved services and more effective and inclusive local governance.

Key research questions (related to Proposition 4 of the theory of change): To what extent have LSPs identified specific ways in which they need to add value to local efforts to improve governance and services? What successes can they point to so far?

4.1 WHAT IS ADDED VALUE?³⁶

The 'value added' by the LSP is the connection between the activities of the LSP and improved outcomes on the ground, in other words the benefit that working together brings over and above what agencies would achieve working alone.

Our theory of change model adopts a broad catholic approach to the definition of added value. Forms of added value may range from more joined up knowledge and information systems, to co-ordinated strategies, joint initiatives, pooled budgets, levered in resources, jointly developed and exploited innovation and good practice dissemination, and a stronger and more united local 'voice'. All of these potentially contribute to service improvement, including those in priority neighbourhoods, and to positive changes to governance, including a stronger local democracy. This is in tune with the ideas reflected in the concept of a 'new localism' which seeks to re-balance the central-local relationship to permit more local initiative and discretion³⁷. The added value anticipated from LSPs includes, of course, benefits for government in terms of better delivery of national policies and better communication with localities.

Added value is thus not simply achievement of outcomes (which might have nothing to do with the LSP). Neither is it just improvements in process. When (in the action learning set on performance management) partners were asked what value they think they add, the answers typically related to process – developing a shared vision, greater trust, a channel of communication for groups whose voice was previously not heard and so on. But these are, in the final analysis, only a means to the end of better outcomes for local people.

Assessing added value involves making the link between the work of the LSP, these 'process outcomes', and change on the ground.

This link will almost certainly not be quantifiable ('x% of a given improvement was attributable to the LSP') and may be illustrative rather than comprehensive, but it

³⁶ This chapter draws particularly on evidence from the action learning set on Performance Management, and also from the case studies.

³⁷ Corry D and Stoker G (2002) *New localism: Refreshing the centre-local relationship*. London: New Local Government Network.

should provide some reassurance that the LSP is having an impact. An initial purpose of the performance management action learning set was to define some process indicators that will help to demonstrate a link between partnership working and improved outcomes. However the group questioned the value and practicality of defining quantitative indicators of added value and considered it was better to focus their attention on helping LSPs to think about how they might maximise added value.

4.2 WHY ASSESS ADDED VALUE?

There are two views among LSPs on the necessity of assessing added value. One view is that partners would regard it as introspective at the present time to divert resources towards seeking to analyse the link between partnership processes and outcomes compared to what might have been achieved.

The other view (which is probably held by most LSPs) is that partners need to know they are making a difference, in order to make the time and other resources they put into the partnership worthwhile. In this view, it cannot be assumed that partnership working produces benefits which outweigh the significant costs involved. And being able to make a link between actions and outcomes is important for the process of learning and improvement – it may be that some partnership activities are much more effective in changing outcomes than others, or that partnership working has a greater impact in some policy areas than others, and if the partnership knows this they can focus their efforts accordingly.

Clearly, in examining value-added, it is important to take account of the costs of high levels of partnership working and of community engagement; while recognising these have a range of benefits which cannot be simply measured. It may well be that desired social outcomes cannot be achieved through single agency action, and are worth high levels of investment.

4.3 PROPORTIONATE VALUE

The value that LSPs are adding thus has to be set against the costs of partnership working, if an assessment is to be made of whether the LSP is adding 'proportionate value'³⁸. We are aware of no LSP that has made such an assessment. While LSPs are able to measure the costs of dedicated staffing and allocated resources, there are clearly significant 'hidden costs' in the time both of LSP members and of staff within their organisations offering support. These include both financial and opportunity costs falling on the private, community and voluntary sectors as well as costs to public sector partners. We do not believe it is realistic to expect LSPs (or this evaluation) to undertake a rigorous assessment of the cost-effectiveness of partnership working. However, partners might find it helpful to ask themselves periodically, in general or in relation to specific activities, whether in their judgement partnership working is creating proportionate value and how it might do so better.

³⁸ By proportionate value we mean whether value added is proportionate to the resource costs. This is similar to, but not the same as, net additionality.

4.4 ASSESSING ADDED VALUE – ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

Ideally, the system for monitoring and evaluation of the value added by the LSP itself should:

- Enable partners to identify the extent to which they have exerted influence on the processes, cultures, policies, plans and activities of partners and sub-partnerships and aligned these with partnership priorities
- Enable partners to demonstrate how the partnership has contributed to outcomes for local people
- Provide diagnosis to help the partnership to modify its focus, actions and its internal structures and processes so that it becomes more effective in adding value
- Include a rough estimate of the costs of partnership working as the basis for assessing whether the value added is proportionate to the costs.

Thinking about added value can be done at various stages in the planning and performance management cycle – in advance, by trying to identify ways in which the LSP can add value in the future, and retrospectively as an assessment of the actual impact of the LSP; the most effective approach would be to do both. The process is likely to be easier for some partnerships than others, depending on the nature of the partnership and its activities; for example it may be more difficult for a high level strategic partnership than for one which is actively involved in specific programmes. There are several possible approaches – summarised in Box 4.1; the Report of the Action Learning Set on Performance Management gives details.

Box 4.1 Ways of assessing added value

- Planning for added value: looking for opportunities to add value as part of the planning process
- Performance management for added value: looking for opportunities for partners to provide added value as part of the process of discussing progress
- Retrospective assessment of evidence of changes in mainstream plans and service delivery
- Analysis of the impact of the partnership using a structured series of questions to trace the chain of causality
- A case study approach, looking at one area in depth to provide generalisable lessons
- External evaluation of all or part of the partnership's activities

4.5 WHAT VALUE ARE LSPS ADDING?

Demonstrating the value that LSPs are adding is, therefore, extremely difficult. While many LSPs are able to identify process outcomes, few have got beyond this to evidence of tangible improvements in the lives of local people. If our theory of

change is correct, this is not unduly surprising – it must be expected that it will take time for the LSP to have an impact.

In most cases, LSPs are cautious about the claims they would make about adding value. Indeed, in one or two cases at least, there is questioning about whether the LSP is adding value. However, the evaluation has found that many LSPs can identify a number of ways in which they are adding value (Box 4.2), even though this is difficult to quantify, and mostly refers to process gains rather than outcomes. As Box 4.2 shows, we have found evidence for many of the types of value added indicated in our theory of change. The fact that it is difficult to find evidence of contribution to outcomes does not necessarily mean that there is no such contribution, but that chains of causality are so complex that LSPs cannot unravel them and/or have not made this a priority.

Box 4.2 Examples of added value identified by LSPs

Joined-up knowledge information base

Many LSPs are sharing information. This ranges from the monitoring of PIs on outcomes in the Community Strategy to sharing operational information as the basis for better informed action – this latter often within the context of a topic-based sub-partnership. Some LSPs have a jointly appointed data manager to facilitate this process. For example in Surrey a shared database provides information to 11 crime and disorder reduction partnerships across the county; crime data can be analysed alongside social and economic risk factors.

A less concrete aspect of this is one of the most frequently mentioned benefits of partnership working. Through discussion and joint working partners come to have a wider understanding of issues and the root causes of problems, and this leads them to change their policies and services. One specific example of this comes from Coventry, where the Law Centre has provided training courses to help asylum seekers to understand their rights; this would not have happened without the LSP

Collective vision, co-ordinated strategy

This is probably the area in which LSPs have made most progress. The process of developing the Community Strategy and LNRS and getting a large number of partners signed up to this is seen by LSPs as a significant achievement in itself, and a precursor to more direct impact. Partner organisations are starting to see what they have in common but also recognise their differences including potentially conflicting aims, which it can be helpful to acknowledge and have out in the open. Vertical as well as horizontal links are starting to be made between organisations and levels of working.

Coordinated policies, targets, PIs

Some LSPs show signs of getting better at joint planning – through coming to grips with different planning cycles for single strategies and getting better integration between the Community Strategy, corporate plans and thematic plans. For instance Wigan has a comprehensive performance management system for the delivery of the Community Strategy underpinned by a ‘causal web’ showing the linkages between plans, activities and objectives. In Wakefield partners have

undertaken joint action planning for the delivery of Community Strategy objectives. Tameside and Kirklees are using NRF funding for work through the thematic partnerships, or via a theme-based approach, to act as a catalyst to improve mainstream services.

Joint initiatives and projects

Better relationships between partners are resulting in closer working over specific issues, including difficult and ‘political’ issues. In some areas this is leading to the development of shared policies to meet agreed problems. For instance in one locality the LSP agencies have developed a Race Equality Scheme, leading to improved recruitment of target groups in partner agencies. There are also examples of joint action clearly attributable to multi-lateral partnership working, for instance businesses reducing rubbish generated, in pursuit of the goal of a ‘safe and clean environment’.

Pooled and refocused budgets

We have found no examples of pooled budgets outside the area of health and social care, where the pooling cannot really be attributed to the LSP. There is however some evidence of refocusing of budgets – for instance in Surrey where the LSP has influenced the direction of resources towards Local Public Service Agreement targets.

Levered-in resources

One source of added value from a local perspective is the legitimacy the LSP brings when seeking central government funds. The collective voice represented by the LSP can strengthen bids and therefore result in leveraging in more external funding.

Resource synergy

Even where there is no pooling of budgets, co-ordinated action can produce synergies leading to the more cost-effective use of resources.

Innovation and good practice dissemination

The LSP can be a catalyst for change through challenging partners on the *status quo* and providing the mutual support that can encourage innovation and risk taking which would be more difficult for agencies to do on their own. Involvement of the community, voluntary and business sectors can lead to new approaches to problems. For instance in one locality, involving the community sector in development of the draft economic development plan resulted in a new understanding of potential service deliverers and their capacity and led to support for voluntary sector service providers to set up a social enterprise network.

Stronger and more united local ‘voice’

A strong LSP can help to push issues – for instance with the Government Office - that are of local concern. Partners see that there is ‘strength in numbers’; this can help partners to resist imposed policies which have no local relevance. Conversely, by their inclusivity LSPs can assist in the delivery of new national agendas, such as community cohesion.

Leeds is significant in that the existence of a predecessor partnership for fourteen years has given local stakeholders time to assess its relevance and contribution. There is considerable pride in the Leeds Initiative amongst those involved. It is seen as having contributed to some of the city's significant achievements such as raising its commercial profile and bringing the Royal Armouries to Leeds. It has proved very successful in bringing together 'the great and the good'. As well as being a mark of commitment to the city, the time that various partners invest in the LSP is an indication that they think it worthwhile. This self-perceived added value from partnership working through the Leeds Initiative comes from encouraging collaboration and development in the city through:

- joint planning: building co-operation and consensus towards common goals;
- joint ventures: combining resources to deliver specific projects and outputs;
- lobbying: raising the city's profile and influencing external policies;
- networking: sharing knowledge and ideas and developing trust among organisations.

Leeds may be seen as an example of an LSP which is able to build on a tradition of partnership working to continue to add value in a way which more recent partnerships will find difficult.

In **Tameside** one specific example was given. At a meeting where the Primary Care Trust presented its health plan and spending programme, the discussion that followed touched on the recruitment difficulties that the Trust might experience. The discussion prompted the Primary Care Trust representative to agree to convene a working group with Jobcentre Plus and other partners. This group has met and is now working on a health recruitment strategy. The Primary Care Trust informant accepted that this instance of partnership working would not have happened, in the way and at the speed at which it did, without the Partnership meeting. It was an unexpected but fortuitous outcome of the meeting that the existence of the Strategic Partnership enabled.

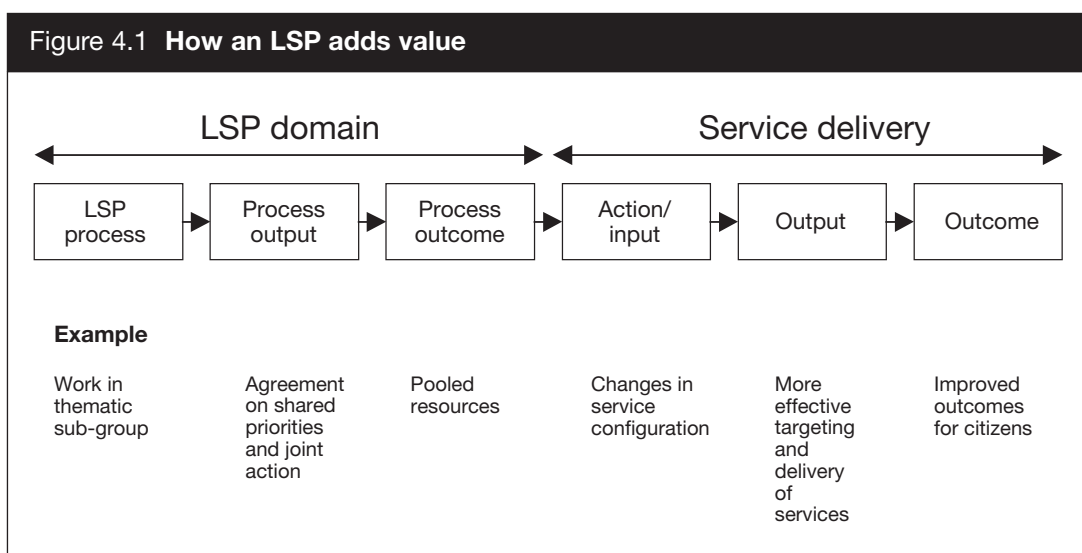
In **West Suffolk** interviewees were able to identify examples of potential added value that typically related to policy problems with a clear cross-agency dimension (although as elsewhere it was not clear how the LSP would deliver something that a specific partnership could not deliver). One interviewee thought added value might mean tackling insidious and on-going problems that are not top of anyone's agenda at the moment. This was felt to be essentially because central government targets tend not to promote them as policy priorities - fear of crime rather than crime rates per se, or problems of low educational aspirations rather than exam results were given as examples. The difficulties surrounding the Community Strategy preparation are indicative of the problems that partners are having in working out what the added value of the LSP might be. More directly the LSP was seen as a vehicle for adding resources, through enhancing bidding capacity and success, rather than adding value.

In general the case studies suggest that the added value of the LSP in terms of process is emerging as recognition of the fact that:

- Community Strategies and LNRs require a strong partnership body to drive them.
- An LSP can help to distance some issues from the political arena if the latter is preventing progress being made.
- Cross agency commitment may be easier to sustain via an LSP than in a project specific partnership.

The Leeds example raises the interesting question “What difference does a Local Strategic Partnership make compared with other partnerships?”. This question arises both in comparing the value added by the LSP with the value added by pre-existing general partnerships from which the LSP often developed, and in comparing the value of the LSP itself with the value added by partnerships (generally now sub-partnerships of the LSP) that focus on specific policy areas such as crime and disorder or on specific neighbourhoods. It highlights one of the most difficult aspects of assessing value added in this context. Partnership working has by now become embedded as a result of both LSPs and partnerships set up for area based initiatives or other specific purposes. In localities such as Leeds experience of partnership working has strengthened relationships between partners and made them more aware of other perspectives, so that they think and act differently, a difference which may not be traceable to specific decisions or actions of the LSP itself. It is therefore difficult to define the counterfactual - value added compared with what? This is a topic we will be exploring further in the next stage of our research.

The diagram below (Figure 4.1) gives a simplified causal chain showing how an LSP might contribute to improvements in outcomes, illustrated with a hypothetical example.



In practice added value can take many forms and causality is likely to be multi-stranded, as indicated by our theory of change. Causality may also be indirect or cumulative as indicated by the example above from Leeds. And disentangling the effect of the LSP from the effect of other multilateral and bilateral partnership working is likely to be extremely difficult.

4.6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter shows that demonstrating evidence of added value is difficult. While most LSPs recognise the importance of identifying clearly the value they are adding, they are often still cautious in the claims they make. Commonly, examples of added value concern ‘process outcomes’ such as joined up knowledge, coordinated strategy, resource synergy and stronger and more united local voice.

The difficulty encountered in identifying concrete examples of improved outcomes on the ground so far is likely to be in large part a reflection of factors identified earlier in this report, including:

- The stage of LSP development – many LSPs have not been in existence for long enough to have had much tangible impact, and up to now have spent much of their time on the process of establishing themselves rather than substantive work on policies, programmes or projects.
- LSPs are encouraged to focus on outcomes rather than intermediate measures. There are increasing levels of difficulty associated with movement from measuring inputs and outputs to measuring outcomes, which are often strongly affected by external factors, are difficult to influence, and are often by their nature slow to change. These are compounded in the case of cross-cutting issues, which typically require an input from several partners. This makes it very difficult for the partnership to demonstrate that it is adding value by contributing to improved outcomes.
- The chains of causality are extremely complex. Much of the detailed work which might be easier to relate to outcomes is undertaken by sub partnerships, and as such is not always seen as an activity of the LSP itself. In other cases the influence of partnership working on the decisions and actions of partners – which is what, in most cases, directly leads to change on the ground - may be subtle, indirect and cumulative rather than a simple reflection of a discussion or decision at a partnership meeting.

This does not necessarily mean there is no added value in terms of outcomes, simply that at this stage it is not possible to demonstrate it.

Developing an approach to the assessment of added value in our case studies, and looking for examples of the sort of added value indicated in our theory of change, will be an important strand in the next stage of this study.

**ADDING VALUE TOWARDS OUTCOMES:
IMPLICATIONS FOR LSP POLICY AND PRACTICE****Implications for LSPs**

- Many LSPs need to develop more effective tools for monitoring and maximising the contribution they are making to improvements in service delivery and in local governance.
- There are different approaches which LSPs can adopt to identify the value they are adding.
- In evolving approaches to value added, LSPs need to take account of the costs, including hidden costs of LSPs, and examine the extent to which they add 'proportionate value'.

Implications for government

- Government should recognise the difficulties LSPs face in demonstrating added value, especially given the early stage of LSP development.
- There are important networking, facilitation and dissemination roles for government and GOs in promoting innovative and effective approaches to identifying the value added by LSPs.

5. Conclusion

The thinking behind the establishment of LSPs, as summarised in our theory of change, postulates that the creation of a new local institution can instigate inclusive and effective processes of negotiation and deliberation among local interests which will generate a shared local sense of direction and local capacity, unifying and adding clarity to the local governance agenda and priorities for service delivery, so that partners will then implement the vision/strategy, both within their own organisations, and multilaterally. In so doing, service delivery and governance gains occur because agencies have a better understanding of what the community wants, and work together to deliver. In due course, success will create a cycle of increasing and sustainable outcomes, underpinned by enhanced social capital and inter-institutional links and capacity.

At this point, the evaluation suggests that significant steps have been taken in many localities, within the framework of national policy, to move forward in this direction, by setting up structures and working processes, and developing a common sense of direction and framework for action expressed in Community and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies, although it is too soon for substantial outcomes to be mapped, and progress is varied along a number of dimensions. This broad conclusion is supported by evidence from the Manchester University survey referred to earlier, which showed that about three quarters of LSP partners surveyed consider that the LSP is creating better understanding and trust among partners; more effective ways of working between them; and enhancing their capacity to learn from shared experience. However only about half thought it is yet leading to more inclusive local governance; and only about one third say it is influencing the way in which their organisation works.

At the same time, some potential threats to the achievement of positive outcomes are becoming apparent. These range from the limits to the resources available to many LSPs in relation to the scale of their tasks, and the need to consolidate processes of both governance and performance management; to the danger of excessive and premature demands from government, and obstacles to the fuller participation of local public agencies, often stemming from competing national priorities. In this report, we have identified policy implications and recommendations for both LSPs and other local actors, and for government, to build on the progress which many LSPs have already made and to help overcome the factors which may limit further progress.

PART 3

Further work to be undertaken

This report has been an interim report of the ongoing formative evaluation.

A number of substantial further pieces of work are now due to be undertaken and completed during the remainder of the formative evaluation and action research, in the period up to spring 2005. These include:

- The 2004 survey of all LSPs
- Further survey and related work, on issues including transport and accessibility planning, leadership issues and business involvement.
- Action learning sets on
 - Rationalising plans and policies
 - Two tier working
 - Regional and subregional relationships.
- Regional learning sets developed in co-ordination with GOs.
- Further work on the nine case studies, leading to a final case studies report.
- Issues papers on topics including the following:
 - The theory of change
 - Transport and accessibility planning
 - Business engagement
 - Below the LSP – neighbourhood and area issues
 - LSPs and leadership
 - Voluntary and community sector engagement
 - A further paper on a topic to be decided
- Final report on the formative evaluation and action research.

It is intended to continue to utilise the theory of change approach in driving the next stages of the research, and to generate more specific research questions, in

relation to each ‘theoretical proposition’, in order to continue to test the fundamental principles underpinning LSPs.

In particular, it will be necessary to review the above work programme with a number of issues in mind, including:

- The need to shift the balance of the evaluation towards value added and emerging outcomes, while continuing to monitor and assess ‘process’ aspects, recognising the continuing formative nature of this phase of the evaluation.
- The need to reflect differences in the performance of LSPs, ranging from high performing LSPs at the cutting edge of development but also the implications of less rapid or successful development.
- The establishment of a baseline for the Summative Evaluation.

At the same time, the work undertaken so far, and brought together in this Interim Report, indicates a number of specific issues which we consider may need further research.

These include, for example:

- The resource and staffing base of LSPs, and ways of ensuring LSPs are not held back by deficiencies in this respect
- The LSP and the local representative democratic process
- The relationships between the LSP and other partnerships at local and sub-local level
- The broad issue of ‘delivering’ LSP strategy
- The role of middle managers in mainstreaming
- Identifying the ‘proportionate value’ added by the LSP

This is intended as an indicative not an exhaustive list. In planning the further work to be undertaken, it will be necessary to fully review the implications of this report in order to ensure that the ongoing evaluation meets its objectives.

In the longer term, the success of LSPs will be demonstrated by the extent to which they provide a robust and sustainable local context within which the key challenges facing localities can be managed, and within which initial successes create a virtuous cycle of improved outcomes for partners and communities.

The Final Report on Stage 1 of the evaluation (March 2005) will provide more evidence on both processes and outcomes and on the sustainability of progress in LSPs, and will also provide the base for further (summative) evaluation of the impacts and added value of LSPs (preliminarily scheduled for 2005 – 2007).

APPENDIX 1

Integral Outputs

The national LSP evaluation has an ongoing dissemination strategy. The following component reports are complete and available at: http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_locgov

- Report of 2002 survey of all LSPs, 2002
- Interim report of 9 longitudinal case studies, 2003
- Case studies of LSP performance management systems, 2003
- Assessment of LNRs in the 87 NRF LSPs, 2003
- Governance - Action learning set report, 2004
- Mainstreaming – Action learning set report, 2004
- Community Engagement – Action learning set report, 2004
- Performance Management – Action learning set report, 2004
- Strategic Planning – Action learning set report, 2004
- LSPs and Transport Accessibility Planning, 2004
- LSP Theory of change issue paper, 2004
- The remaining component reports are preliminarily scheduled:
- (Sub) Regional Contexts – Action learning set report, autumn 2004
- Rationalisation – Action learning set report, autumn 2004
- 2-tier working – Action learning set report, autumn 2004
- Report of 2004 survey of all LSPs, late 2004
- Private sector engagement – Issue paper, early 2005
- Voluntary and Community sector engagement – Issue paper, early 2005
- Below the LSP – Issue paper, early 2005
- LSPs and Leadership – Issue paper, autumn 2004
- Other issue papers – TBD
- Final longitudinal case study reports, Spring 2005
- Final formative evaluation report, Summer 2005

APPENDIX 2

Abbreviations

ABI	Area Based Initiatives
ALS	Action Learning Sets
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic (populations)
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CEF	Community Empowerment Fund
CG	Central Government
CLNRS	Community and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CPAG	Community Plan Action Groups
CS	Community Strategy
CVS	Community and Voluntary Sector
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DfT	Department for Transport
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
GLA	Greater London Authority
GNP	Greater Nottingham Partnership
GO	Government Office
GONW	Government Office North West
HDA	Health Development Agency
HImP	Health Improvement Plans
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LAP	Local Area Partnerships
LDA	London Development Agency
LGMA	Local Government Modernisation Agenda
LNRS	Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies
LPG	Liverpool Partnership Group
LPSA	Local Public Service Agreement
LRGRU	Local and Regional Government Research Unit
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
LTA	Local Transport Authority
LTP	Local Transport Plans

NCP	Neighbourhoods and Communities Partnership
NCR	New Commitment to Regeneration
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NLDC	Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities
NM	Neighbourhood Management
NR	Neighbourhood Renewal
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
NRS	Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies
NRU	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
NS	National Strategy
NSNR	National Strategy Neighbourhood Renewal
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OPM	Office for Public Management
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PMG	Partnerships Management Group
PSA	Public Service Agreements
PSB	Public Sector Bodies
RAE	Research, Analysis and Evaluation Division ODPM
RCU	Regional Co-ordination Unit
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RRZ	Rural Regeneration Zone
SEEDA	South East Economic Development Association
SWEET	Street Workers' Education and Empowerment Team
THP	Tower Hamlets Partnership
TSP	Tameside Strategic Partnership
YOT	Youth Offending Team

APPENDIX 3

Transport Planning and Accessibility

1. BACKGROUND

Transport and accessibility issues were addressed in two elements of the first phase of the overall evaluation:

- (1) In the first stage of case study fieldwork (Spring 2003). Interim report 'LSP evaluation: Case studies interim report – A baseline of practice (Full report and summary)'³⁹
- (2) In researching an LSP Issues Paper on Transport and Accessibility, specifically prepared to support the Department for Transport's Guidance on Accessibility Planning and Local Transport Plans⁴⁰.

This appendix briefly describes the Case Study and Issues Paper experience of transport and highlights key issues of LSP working on transport and accessibility.

Particular attention was given in initial case study work in early 2003 to establishing the extent to which LSPs were engaged with transport issues, and hence the appendix (to that report) gives a disproportionately large impression of the salience of transport within LSP activity at that time. In reality – both at the time of case studies fieldwork and a year later during the Issues Paper fieldwork - LSPs had given relatively little attention to transport as compared to other substantive issues such as education, health or neighbourhood renewal.

This limited attention to transport sits oddly with the impression gained from interviews that transport in general and certain aspects of accessibility are widely seen as the most intransigent of issues confronting localities. Evidence from the research undertaken for the Issues Paper fieldwork, however, confirms the likelihood that a larger number of LSPs will follow the example of those for whom a concern for accessibility/transport issues has resulted in structural and in some instances substantive innovation.

³⁹ http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=5112&l=4

⁴⁰ http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_control/documents/contentservertemplate/dft_index.hcst?n=12569&l=4

2. THE EVIDENCE BASE

This appendix focuses upon the emerging findings from the following case studies where material relevant to transport and accessibility issues were collected:

<i>LSP</i>	<i>LA status</i>	<i>Transport Authority</i>	<i>LSP Transport Membership</i>	<i>Transport Specific Arrangements (P'ship theme or sub-group, task force, forum etc.)</i>
Blackburn with Darwen	Unitary	Yes	No	–
Bristol	Unitary	Yes	No	–
Broxbourne	District	No	No	An Integrated Transport Partnership (joint between the County Council and NHS co-ordinates information on and development of community transport services.
East Hertfordshire	District		No	
Hertfordshire	County	Yes	No	
East Durham	District	No	No	Transport within Environment Group remit
Durham	County	Yes	No	Local Transport Plan Partnership
Gloucester	District	No	No	–
Eastleigh	District	No	No	Transport Topic Group
Hampshire	County	Yes	Yes	No, but wider Solent Transport Partnership and (but Transport task force within Hampshire Economic Partnership).
Herefordshire	Unitary	Yes	Yes	Transport ambition Group (reference group and 7 forums)
Leeds	Met Boro	Yes	Yes	Leeds Integrated Transport Partnership
Malvern Hills	District	No	No	Malvern Hills Rural Transport Partnership
Worcestershire	County	Yes	No	–
Medway	Unitary	Yes	No	Medway Transport Partnership
Nottingham	Unitary	Yes	No	(but Greater Nottingham Transport Partnership), also Transport sub-group in Broxtowe
Southampton	Unitary	Yes	Yes	Southampton Transport Forum
Southwark	London Borough	Yes	No	–
Tameside	Met. Boro.	Yes	Yes	Greater Manchester PTE structures
Greater Manchester	No LSP. PTA covers metropolitan area.			
West Suffolk	District	No	No	–

3. KEY FINDINGS

The following paragraphs combine the findings and issues arising from the research.

There are issues around the levels, structures, representation, ways of working and effectiveness of partnership working. LSPs are more likely to achieve feasible priorities for transport if there is sufficient input from the LTA, Local Authority and expert partners and if there are appropriate contexts and timescales in which this input can occur. Key issues include:

- There can be a lack of communication between district and county level LSPs leading to a diminishing voice for district level views.

- Where there are no links with established transport stakeholders, two-way exchanges between LSP and LTP policies can be poor.
- Often LSPs don't have a dedicated transport theme group and the most relevant theme group has a wide remit. The impact of informed members is therefore limited, something that can be exacerbated by the fact that theme groups sometimes only take on an active role after the community strategy has been formulated (i.e. there is limited opportunity to feed in expertise at the development stage).
- LTAs have started to prepare new LTPs to cover the period 2006-11. Provisional LTPs are due in July 2005 and final LTPs by March 2006. There is a need for LSPs to work quickly to have a productive input into these LTPs.
- LTA staff working on implementation tend to have limited involvement with LSPs leading to risks that LSP's work isn't sufficiently linked to practical aspects of transport planning.
- There can be a lack of full involvement and support of local authority officers leading to the LSP's production of ineffective proposals or proposals that have already been rejected by the Local Authority.

This appendix goes on to assess transport related findings on:

Section 4 – Partner engagement within LSPs.

Section 5 – Realities of strategic planning within LSPs.

Section 6 – The work of LSPs on accessibility.

4. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITHIN LSP

The relationship between Local Transport Authorities and LSPs

Requirements for the Local Transport Plan (LTP), set out in the Transport Act 2000 and in the various guidance notes issued by the DfT, lay considerable emphasis on effective consultation with stakeholders and with the community at large. Almost all LTAs have created one or more panels for consultation and stakeholder reference (some of which may pre-date the LTP process). They have usually involved a range of user groups, transport providers, business and community bodies, and other public agencies. Some have tended to exist on an ad hoc basis, enabling consultation to be carried out but not otherwise having a distinctive function.

These forums have often created a useful basis for co-operative planning and action, especially between LTAs and public transport providers. Their nature often bears a close resemblance to partnerships, and in some cases they have been specifically designated as a partnership. Where such partnerships existed, they have sometimes been incorporated into LSPs when these were founded, usually as a transport theme group. In one or two cases they may have been the main basis for an LSP.

Medway Council established the Medway Transport Partnership (MTP) to act as the prime focus for stakeholder engagement in preparing for its first LTP. Its members include representatives of transport providers, transport users' and community groups, business interests, and Medway Council (members and officers), and it is administered by the Council's Integrated Transport Unit. When the Medway **LSP** was set up, MTP became its transport theme group, thus providing a direct link between the LSP, community planning, and the Council's transport policies and action through the LTP.

In the **Leeds** Initiative (the LSP for Leeds), the theme group for transport policy and action is the Integrated Transport Partnership (ITP). This has three dozen members, drawn from education, health, business, environmental groups, the City Council, the PTE and transport providers. It has an independent chairman. **West Yorkshire PTE** is represented by its Director General. The ITP meets about 3 or 4 times a year, with some flexibility; it may deal with matters through email communications at any time.

The Southampton Transport Forum was established shortly after the **Southampton Partnership** (LSP) formed in January 2002 to represent the transport and infrastructure sector. A member of the Transport Forum sits on the LSP Board. Transport officers from the city council attend the Transport Forum and are able to ensure that the Forum is well informed about LTP plans and policies. The Transport Forum (and Southampton Partnership) is considered to be an important new medium for consultation in the LTP development process.

Durham County Council had developed a LTP Partnership Forum as part of its work on the first LTP and the APRs. This remains in existence, but now also forms the transport theme group for the County Partnership. It will play an important role in the new LTP, for which workshops are already being held. The district LSPs will be consulted as part of this process.

In **Hampshire** joint working takes place between the county council and district councils and neighbouring unitary authorities through Joint Member Panels for the ten Area Transport Strategies which cover the county. These Local Area Transport Panels invite up to three members of the LSP to act as representatives and ensure effective communication takes place.

LTA officers in some of the case studies (e.g. Leeds, Southampton) have noted the value of LSPs in legitimising LTP policies. This can happen where LSPs adopt already published LTP policies or where LSPs establish new policies which can subsequently be incorporated into LTPs. In essence the LSP can provide a more effective medium for consultation than has previously been possible.

However, the links between LSPs and Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) are often underdeveloped. LTA partnership arrangements often already exist, but LSPs represent a mechanism for potentially more effective partnership working that can help rationalise the process of information gathering and consulting and engaging in discussion with multiple bodies.

Representation and Involvement of Transport Interests in the LSP

The major question is attendance by public transport providers, especially representatives of bus and rail businesses. In major urban areas, including the PTA areas, there often is such representation, at least from major bus companies, sometimes at board level, and certainly on the transport theme group. Representation from railway providers is rather less common. In most other areas bus and rail companies are not usually represented on the main board, and may not even be involved with meetings of the relevant theme group. LSP/LTA representatives suggest that commercial considerations prevent greater engagement by public transport operators. Attending LSPs for most of them is very unlikely to provide clues to additional business or influence over the operating environment (this requires contacts with the LTA's public transport and highways teams, which public transport companies usually do maintain). They also have very lean management teams, especially at local level. However, in areas where partnership working has included a strong focus on transport it has been found that public transport operators have maintained engagement over a long period of time.

Public transport operators play an important role on the LSP and transport theme groups for **Brighton & Hove**, Hampshire and **Medway** LSPs and for the **Leeds Initiative**.

Concerns over the absence of transport operators have been expressed by LSPs for **Blackburn with Darwen**, **East Hertfordshire**, **Hertfordshire**, **Malvern Hills** and **Worcestershire**.

Theme Groups

Typically LSPs have a number of theme groups, drawing on a wide range of organisations. In the cases where there is a specific theme group for transport (e.g. Durham, Medway, Leeds, Southampton), membership can include representatives from transport providers, public authority transport units and community and business organisations with transport interests (including transport campaign groups). Often, however, LSPs do not have a (dedicated) transport theme group. Instead transport is identified as a main issue but transport and related issues become the responsibility for a theme group with a broader remit, such as environment or community. In such cases, while the main priorities and actions concerning transport will be developed by that group, its transport membership may not necessarily be significant.

In principle theme groups exist for two reasons: to develop the priorities in a particular field, for input to the overall community strategy; and to develop and implement the action plan for its priorities. Because strategies are in many cases developed largely from community views, there are cases where theme groups have taken on an active role only after completion of the strategy; so they exist to implement policies which may not seem feasible to the informed members of the theme group, and which therefore do not get taken forward. This can reduce the LSP's ability to produce practical results.

5. REALITIES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING WITHIN LSP

Barriers to effective working of LSPs in the area of transport: Scale, Boundaries and Inter-Authority relations

There are serious questions about the appropriate level at which to handle transport issues and the appropriate institutional arrangements with which to address these issues. This in turn raises specific questions about two tier working, and the relationship of district concerns about accessibility, congestion, buses, town centres etc, to the broader concerns at county or sub-regional/regional levels.

A related question is that of boundaries and the handling of cross-boundary issues, especially where these are cross sub-regional or cross-regional boundaries. Lack of co-terminosity exacerbates these issues. For accessibility planning there are many cross-boundary issues that need to be addressed (public transport services, provision of services) and the Issues Paper recognises the need to ensure that LSPs in districts which lie within a sub-regional functional transport area produce preferably joint, but at least consistent, accessibility plans, and appropriate LSPs should collaborate in this.

The Issues paper suggested that for some areas, notably the main urban areas, the relationship between LSP accessibility and transport policies and the policies in the LTP can be close. Two-way exchanges have been made to ensure that transport policies adopted within the emerging community strategies reflect those in the LTP and then in turn the LTP picks up aspects raised by the community strategy (Bristol and Southampton offered examples). This is particularly helped where there is a strong working relationship between the LSP and an established transport organisation: the PTE in PTE areas (e.g. Leeds and West Yorkshire PTE), or an LTP forum/partnership in other areas (e.g. Medway). In contrast the links can be weak in some areas, notably those where there is no established transport organisation or forum, and more particularly in two-tier areas. Developing agreement over principles can help to tie these in. However this does take time and effort, and may be seen as one element which needs to evolve as the LSP itself evolves.

In **Greater Manchester** there already exists a joint Steering Group for the LTP, representing the PTE and all the metropolitan borough councils. This co-ordinates the input from all of these and guides a joint action team within the PTE which does the actual work (this includes staff on secondment from the boroughs). The Steering Group will continue to have a key role. It will be complemented by a joint Greater Manchester Strategic Forum now being established to represent all the boroughs and other agencies. This will receive input from the ten borough partnerships and establish theme groups, probably including a transport theme group. The chairman of the LTP Steering Group will play an important role on this.

Improving accessibility is an area for priority action in the **Hampshire** Community Strategy for its 2004-2007 development plan. Consistent with this is the fact that **Eastleigh** is considering accessibility as a cross-cutting issue and considering non-mobility solutions to access problems. In other districts in Hampshire it tends to have been considered at a service level (e.g. access to hospitals) and normally public transport solutions have been proposed without realistic consideration of funding availability and of the alternative of bringing services to people. A greater comprehension of the accessibility planning approach is required at a district level and there may be a role in the county providing educational support on this.

County Durham provides a typical case of the difficulties faced in co-ordinating county and district transport plans. The districts have no transport functions but have links with the County LTP Partnership Forum which is a wide group and covers mainly strategic transport matters. There is a concern in districts like **Easington** that the County is reactive rather than proactive over district level issues. Thus the main links with the County Council are over specific projects. In the District Council's view, regeneration and related factors should be far more strongly weighed in transport decisions and priorities, especially for public transport. For Durham County Council's transport officers they see a need to educate the district councils, LSPs and local community groups of the opportunities and barriers for improved community and public transport. In principle the development of LSPs offers a valuable opportunity to bring co-ordination into this area, but so far progress has been limited.

Two-tier authorities

A further complication arises for district level LSPs in two-tier English local authority areas. The administrator for the district council LSP usually liaises with their equivalent for the county LSP. This may well mean that other county staff, including those responsible for transport, are at a further stage removed from the district LSPs. Thus the aims and themes for district level LSPs may be far removed from the direction of the county council approach. In consequence, district LSPs may ignore transport or develop unrealistic aspirations, further widening the gap between county council transport officers and district level LSP priorities. This can be a serious problem, as the district level LSP is in principle the body reflecting the local community view.

In some cases there has been good liaison (e.g. Malvern Hills and other districts in Worcestershire), and this is strengthening the transport approach overall. These

cases appear to have involved significant input of time and energy on the part of the county council transport department; this may be of value where there is a positive gain, but not otherwise. In the PTA areas, there is generally closer working, and the PTE is usually more willing to take a strong lead, at least on public transport matters, and on transport generally through the joint LTP arrangements normally found. In some cases this means PTE directors serving on the LSP (e.g. Leeds Initiative and West Yorkshire PTE). In consequence, their officers are kept closely in touch with the community strategy, especially the transport aspects, and thus are able to act effectively in partnership with officers and managers from other services.

In **Hampshire** the Cabinet member for community development and regeneration chairs the Hampshire Strategic Partnership and is a member of, and often attends, all eleven Hampshire district LSPs. An elaborate and well-resourced machinery for two-tier collaboration has developed to support links with district LSPs and Community Strategies, comprising elected members (normally two/three per district), a corporate lead officer and support officer, specialist officers available to offer advice in area of expertise (four available for transport) and community safety link officers. The county has established a Community Strategy grants budget to support collaborative work.

In **Worcestershire** responsibility for managing the LSPs at County Council level lies within the Chief Executive's department, led by a team of three, who liaise closely with district council Community Strategy officers. An additional post (partnership co-ordinator) has been set up to link parish plans in with the County and district Community Strategies. The County Council aims for a free flowing relationship between community planning at all three levels. This is reflected in the close working relationships over the LTP development and implementation between the transport strategy unit and district council officers.

In some urban areas administered by a unitary authority, there is a more co-ordinated management approach. This often involves more compact areas served by rather smaller teams of officers. In consequence there is closer liaison between the officers of various functions, including transport officers (e.g. Medway).

The Medway Transport Partnership (MTP) acts as the transport theme group of the **Medway LSP**. The MTP brings together the main bodies with transport interests, including community representatives, and those responsible for both planning and provision of transport facilities and services. It is administered by the Integrated Transport Unit of **Medway Council**; this unit is responsible for LTP production and monitoring as well as other transport-related functions. The arrangement enables a well informed discussion on all aspects of transport, in principles and in detail, and also feeds directly into particular action programmes. Due to concerns over the capacity of the MTP to deal with the significant amount of transport issues affecting Medway, three sub-groups have now been established covering rail, transport planning and regeneration.

Joint working at a sub-regional level

Community strategies address the community interests and aspirations of their area but at a broader level there is a need to address development (economic, housing and transport) at a sub-regional level, and partnership working is occurring in many cases for this purpose. There is little evidence, however, of joint working by LSPs at a sub-regional level.

The **Bristol** Community Strategy says very little about the transport problems of the (former Avon) sub-region, and there are four LSPs for each of the unitary authority areas. A Joint Committee, together with a Joint Strategic Planning and Transport Unit supports cross-boundary issues, and until recently the West of England Strategic Partnership (WESP) provided a forum for discussion of broader strategic issues. WESP ceased to exist at the end of March 2004, and is to be succeeded by a new partnership to be formed to fulfill new planning responsibilities. The Greater Bristol Strategic Transport study involves all four councils, but there is little evidence of LSP engagement within this long term agenda. The existence of four separate transport authorities is a matter of deep concern to local business interests. Nevertheless, despite anxiety about the absence of a strategic forum for the sub-region, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Initiative contributes constructively to LSP work in Bristol.

The Solent Transport Partnership launched in March 2003 aims to strengthen transport co-ordination through partnership working of all those who have a responsibility or interest in transport planning and provision in **South Hampshire**. It brings together Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council and a range of transport operators, business interests and infrastructure providers to work together to address congestion through providing a wider choice of transport. The three local authorities responsible for highways (Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton) are considering submitting a joint LTP submission in 2005 covering the whole South Hampshire area. They have also worked jointly in developing an accessibility model. At present, LSPs are not engaged in the Solent Transport Partnership.

Barriers to effective working of LSPs in the area of transport: Working arrangements within LTAs and Local Authorities

Clearly the LSPs' work is one of many strands of activity for the local authority; it is also generally a relatively new one. The officers managing it are fully *au fait* with the aims, process and progress, and generally seek to promote effective understanding and consultation throughout the authority. However, given that the local authority is likely to remain a major player in most aspects of implementing the LSP's community strategy, it is vital that they maintain a close working relationship with officers in the key local authority functions, as well as other agencies. Most see this as an important part of their work, but the approach varies. Often officers from other functions will be advised of the LSP's work, and consulted on areas relevant to their responsibilities, but they may not be so directly involved. The involvement of such officers, including those in transport functions, varies: some only see the community strategy as another policy line they have to note;

some may work to support a theme group related to their function and expertise. In some cases authorities are specifically involving other professionals as managers of the relevant theme group; this is particularly so where the theme group was established before the LSP was set up (e.g. Medway, Leeds). All officers, in determining their approaches, need to judge the extent to which they, and any assistants or colleagues, should give priority to the LSP's work.

Given the pressure on local authorities' staffing, and the need to produce effective results in all fields, there is a strong tendency for many officers to concentrate on their own projects and programmes, in line with the decisions of the authority's cabinet and council. Thus new or additional areas of work may, through necessity, receive less attention. In addition, experienced officers may see proposals for change emanating from outside their function as a challenge to their expertise and even to their commitment to their employer. If they are directly engaged in the theme groups, especially where the theme groups do prove successful in enabling more effective delivery of particular functions, then their view is more likely to be positive.

For the most part the LSP can only add significantly to the performance of an existing function if (a) those responsible for the function are not delivering it effectively at present with available tools and the engagement of suitable bodies; and/or (b) the LSP or its theme group provide significant new insights and opportunities. The extent to which this is happening at present remains unclear. Proposals coming forward from initial thinking by LSPs can lie outside the mainstream of the LTP's transport policies or can be ideas previously considered and rejected by the LTA for good reason. This situation may result in a vicious circle: transport professionals become more certain that LSPs have nothing to offer and thus provide less inputs; this means that the LSP is less well advised than it might have been, and thus continues to produce ineffective proposals, thus further weakening its links with transport professionals and failing to achieve added value.

However, it must be stressed that responsibility for the vicious circle depicted here does not lie with the LSP alone. The LTA has responsibilities for ensuring that other bodies have an effective awareness of transport's role in accessibility of facilities and services. To instead create a virtuous circle between the LTA and LSP requires that a two-way relationship exists. By positively engaging with the LSP, the LTA will be in a position to advise community strategy development and neighbourhood renewal strategy development yielding outcome proposals for it to address that hold greater prospect of being effective.

In most LTAs there are three broad categories of staff: transport policy and planning; highways management and development; public transport. Within this, transport policy and planning staff, who are responsible for the LTP management, are more likely to be closer to LSPs and community planning work, because their role involves taking stock of policy issues and of relevant information sources in fields other than transport alone. Members of staff involved with implementation – highways management and public transport – are primarily concerned with implementing the policies within the LTP, and are at a further distance from LSPs' administration. In consequence the risk exists that there will not be effective two-way links between the LSPs' work and the practical aspects of transport planning.

6. WORK OF LSPS ON ACCESSIBILITY

Transport and Accessibility in the Community Strategy

In 2003 the Government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) published a report concerning the links between social exclusion and transport. Recommendations in the report have since been taken up and local transport authorities (LTAs) are now charged with responsibility for its key recommendation - accessibility planning, a formalised process to improve access to everyday facilities in local communities, especially for defined disadvantaged groups in society. LTAs will be expected to address this responsibility as part of their 2005 Local Transport Plans (LTPs).

There are in principle three options for improving accessibility:

- Transport – improved roads (and their management) and improved footways, but especially better services by public and community transport.
- Development/land use planning – provision for locating services near to those needing to use them or in places accessible to them by public, community or private transport and ensuring services are provided or accessible to residents of new dwellings.
- Service delivery – rescheduling times at which services offered and mobile delivery of services to those needing them.

It is unlikely that any one option will be the exclusive solution to any local problem. More importantly, it is essential that all are considered together. This involves two levels in the LSP:

- The issue of accessibility must be considered fully at board level in developing the community strategy and the various action plans. This does not mean that the board has to undertake particular work or discussion; but it should be fully satisfied that the theme groups and key partners have properly assessed and planned for accessibility.
- The action plans for the priority themes should involve explicit consideration of accessibility, with a thorough understanding of where transport may – or may not - be the most effective solution, and how it balances against other factors.

Accessibility to services is an underlying consideration of many of the policy themes in community planning. This often relates to availability: e.g. sufficient trained staff offering appropriate services to meet needs, especially for the more deprived members of the community. However, community strategies often ignore the physical element: e.g. reaching even one clinic, school or food shop of those existing in an area may be very difficult by existing public transport for those without a car, perhaps impossible.

For the first **Durham County** Community Strategy transport is identified as a challenge in its own right, and there is a specific transport theme. The exact title of the theme is Integrated Transport Network, which reflects concerns over access drawn from all the other policy areas adopted as challenges by the Partnership. In the light of these, it is also the one challenge that is deemed to have significant links with all other challenges, reflected in the structure and cross-referencing in the Community Strategy. The main policies in the transport challenge reflect those of the LTP, input by the County Council as LTP authority.

The **Eastleigh** Community Plan consultation document considers eight topic areas (community safety, employment, etc.) and identifies possible priorities in each topic area. In addition four cross-cutting themes (sustainability, access, partnerships, sharing information) are identified with which to assess the contribution to the whole community of the plans and activities across the whole of the Community Strategy.

Building on a first Vision for Leeds published in 1999, the **Leeds Initiative** has developed a second Vision for Leeds setting out a comprehensive strategy for the city, with an inter-related set of eight main themes (which include transport) to address three overall aims (which include narrowing disadvantage) for the city. A prioritised programme of action is identified.

In **Tameside** the first Community Strategy produced in 2000 has been subject to a monitoring exercise and widespread community consultation. The consultation exercise was carried out by MORI and recognised as a good practice model. It involved ranking the existing eight priority themes. In this transport was rated as of lowest concern. Nonetheless, it was widely seen as an issue of widespread importance to all the other themes, and thus it was decided to treat it as a cross-cutting theme.

The transport proposals included in community strategies are often aligned with those in LTPs (e.g. Bristol, Southampton), but those outside the main urban areas tend to concentrate on local community issues such as bus services and air quality. The contribution of accessibility initiatives to neighbourhood renewal currently remains limited. Whilst local transport projects are identified (e.g. Home Zones, Safe Routes to School, pedestrian safety schemes), few neighbourhood strategies appear to offer an accessibility strategy (e.g. explicit strategy to exploit Urban Bus Challenge).

Too often this leads community strategies to focus on improved bus services, without always identifying the nature and purpose of these. In principle these are aimed at improving access, and sometimes the context is clear. However, too often the proposal may simply reflect a weakness in understanding the dynamics of changing behaviour by people and service providers and the potential for transport systems within this. While bus service improvements are welcome, it begs the question as to whether it requires an LSP to reach such conclusions. Focusing exclusively on bus service improvements may divert attention from considering the other solutions to accessibility, either in principle or for specific local problems. Furthermore, it is not apparent that there is clear evidence that when service improvements are delivered that they actually achieve a positive contribution to community development.

In some cases, proposals in the community strategy may already have been identified by the LTA's passenger transport interests or by a local bus operator but rejected as not feasible within the current administrative and operating regime. Because they reflect the results of widely held community views and aspirations, the transport proposals in some community strategies tend to be outside the mainstream of transport, focusing on provision of 'alternative' services, such as minibus links to places deemed in need. Such policy outcomes may of course be very relevant to local communities, within the context of a sound strategy. They are likely to be driven by environmental and community interests, which often concentrate on the very local. These bodies are also likely to promote development of cycling. In contrast, business interests are likely to push for more expansive infrastructure proposals, usually road based. These might also have come out of consultation.

However, if these various aspirations are not filtered through expert guidance, from the LSP board or theme group, or supporting officers, they may involve popular ideas which are unlikely to be implemented. More significantly, they fail to pick up the deficiencies in existing transport systems which also affect people's accessibility; e.g. poor stop access and environment, lack of information, and poor customer care on local buses; poor maintenance, poor or even dangerous conditions and perception of insecurity on footways and walk routes. These aspects concern local public transport which is likely to be used by large numbers of people, many of them from disadvantaged groups, and form a substantial element of transport provision in many urban areas. Failure to understand their significance, their weaknesses and their potential for improvement by the LSP diminishes the opportunity for broader support for improvement in these aspects. Potentially there might be bigger gains in accessibility and social benefit from doing this as compared, for example, to providing a highly subsidised local community transport service, a cycleway used by few people or spending time pressing for a new or improved road.

Implementation and Added value

The LSP is a partnership and not an executive body. Thus it can achieve results only if the partners adopt complementary approaches focused on the agreed priorities and actions. For improving accessibility there are principally three possible avenues for action.

- The LTP and programmes developed from it, the responsibility of the LTA, are the primary basis for transport initiatives. In principle, transport and accessibility measures initiated by other parties may not necessarily relate closely to the LTP, but in practice they are likely to be covered by LTP policies and thus more effectively developed with support from the LTP. It is at present unclear how the LTP will be managed once the new planning framework, with abolition of Structure Plans/Unitary Development Plans, comes into force.
- Spatial planning initiatives, including many aspects of regeneration, are currently covered by the Development Plan, and in future will be part of the LDF. In principle this will offer a wider form of guidance for land use planning at local level, incorporating transport and other key areas. The LDF will be the responsibility of the district council or unitary authority.

- Service delivery initiatives, which are the responsibility of various organisations, e.g. health authorities.

Many accessibility problems are likely to be addressed effectively only through a combination of measures. Within these, understanding the opportunities and problems with transport will remain very important, to offset the tendency of many LSPs to assume all accessibility needs will be met by provision of improved (public) transport. Thus effective action is most likely if community strategies and LTPs have matching policies and are agreed on the approach to implementation. This requires close links, formal and informal, between the LSP – or at least its relevant theme group – and the LTA. Examples of this are in place, taking various forms:

- Transport partnerships which serve both as LTP forums for the LTA and as theme group for the LSP – especially in unitary authorities (e.g. Leeds, Medway, Southampton).
- Strong formal links between the district authority and upper tier authorities through county-wide LSPs, in which the transport theme is a significant factor.
- Good working links between district LSPs administered by district councils and the transport functions of upper tier authorities (e.g. Malvern Hills and Worcestershire).

Two-way links are particularly important here. If LSPs are properly informed of transport opportunities and problems, then these should be reflected in those parts of the community strategy concerned with accessibility and transport: priorities and actions will therefore be related to real possibilities, and the LTA is likely to include measures related to the community strategy in its actions. Equally they enable the LSP to inform the LTA of wider issues where transport remains a key problem and perhaps the only solution, thus enabling the LTA to consider adopting appropriate additional measures in its LTP.

This linkage can be strongly supported by development of matching aims and performance measures for appropriate parts of the LSP's priorities and the LTP. Some examples exist of protocols between LTAs and LSPs to adopt this approach. These will primarily address transport aspects, but should also take in the implications in terms of accessibility; LTAs' responsibilities range beyond purely transport matters. Government guidance on LTPs and APRs stresses that objectives and monitoring should be consistent with wider Government policies, including social inclusion. In the second round of LTPs it will be necessary for LTAs to show how they are contributing towards improvements for seven shared priorities for local government (agreed by the Government and Local Government Association) which include access to jobs and services.

Although many LSPs have now published community strategies, these are subject to on-going revision. Meanwhile, LTAs have started to prepare new LTPs. Provisional LTPs must be submitted in July 2005, with final LTPs due in March 2006, which will then cover a five-year period. The timescale in which LSP-LTA relationships can be developed and matured sufficiently to yield added-value input to the LTP on accessibility planning and transport is therefore very tight. It is questionable whether progress can be sufficient in this short period to make a worthwhile contribution.

The on-going inter-dependency between the community strategy and the LTP demands that LSPs and LTAs recognise the risks associated with not working together now on transport and accessibility planning and in turn commit to the task of joint working.

LSPs have a potentially valuable role to play in providing an holistic approach to improvement of communities. However, they can only achieve this if they bring improvements in the quality of social, economic and physical environment that would not otherwise have been achieved. Looking at the issue of accessibility and transport, two key questions arise from the Issues paper.

- First can LSPs establish new insights on and priorities for effective ways forward for addressing accessibility needs? This requires them to provide new information and set valid directions; and also to establish where means other than transport measures may be more effective for improving accessibility. As discussed earlier, the extent to which this is being achieved is unclear.
- Secondly should the LSPs seek a firm lead on transport and related matters from the LTA or not? As discussed above, the LSP is much more likely to achieve feasible priorities for transport if its processes involve input from the LTA or an expert partnership. In principle this cuts across the aim of LSPs as community based bodies. Certainly, if they reiterate existing LTA policies and programmes without valid reason, then they are not effective. Equally, however, they need informed guidance to produce valid policies.