

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Government guidance

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LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: SUMMARY

What are local strategic partnerships?

1. A local strategic partnership (LSP) is a single body that:
 - 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 and is close enough to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be determined at community level; and
 - should be aligned with local authority boundaries.

Why better partnership working matters

2. Public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations all have a part to play in improving quality of life. The more they can work together, with local people, the more they can achieve and the more likely it is that:
 - the benefits of sustainable growth are achieved across the country;
 - economic, social and physical regeneration happens – and is sustained – in deprived areas;
 - public services work better and are delivered in way which meets people’s needs;
 - local people can influence decision-making and take action to improve their neighbourhoods; and
 - business and the community and voluntary sectors can play a full and equal part.
3. Tackling key issues for local people – such as crime, jobs, education, health and housing – requires a range of local organisations working together. There are already many successful partnerships involving local government, local providers of other public services (such as health, the police, the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency), and local businesses and voluntary organisations. Tackling the biggest challenges, such as social exclusion and the renewal of our most deprived neighbourhoods, demands concerted and co-ordinated effort across all sectors. The Government wants to work with other organisations and with local people to establish ‘local strategic partnerships’ that can achieve this. These partnerships will bring the key organisations together to identify communities’ top priorities and needs and to work with local people to address them.
4. A number of recent initiatives seek to foster the establishment of such partnerships:
 - the introduction of statutory community strategies;
 - steps to rationalise and simplify existing partnerships;
 - the piloting of local agreements between central and local government to tackle key national and local priorities on health, education, community safety and other quality of life issues; and
 - the launch of a national strategy to renew the country’s most deprived neighbourhoods.

Further information on each of these initiatives is set out in Box 1 overleaf.

Box 1: Programmes promoting partnership working		
Programme	Objectives	Why working together is important
Community strategies: new duty on local authorities in England and Wales under Local Government Act 2000 to prepare community strategies. ¹	To improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of each area and its inhabitants, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.	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 given opportunities to contribute.
Rationalisation of the many current separate partnerships, plans and initiatives. ² The steps central government will take will be set out in summer 2001.	To integrate existing plans and initiatives so that it is easier to deliver improvements in health, education, crime and so on; reduce duplication and unnecessary bureaucracy; and make it easier for partners, including those outside the statutory sector, to get involved.	Complex problems need concerted and co-ordinated action. Partners need to ensure they work effectively together across all of their activities. They need to be able to do so in ways that avoid duplication and wasted resources.
Local Public Service Agreements (PSAs): pilots with 20 authorities in 2001/02. ³ With 130 other 'top tier' authorities on a voluntary basis in the two years following 2001/02.	To allow local authorities to commit themselves to delivering key national and local priorities in return for agreed flexibilities, pump-priming funding, and financial rewards if they meet their targets.	Local authorities will need to show that their proposals are supported by local people and other local partners. Joint working will almost always be needed to deliver local PSA targets.
Neighbourhood renewal: National Strategy Action Plan ⁴ published January 2001.	To narrow the gap between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country, with common goals of lower unemployment and crime, and better health, education, housing and physical environment.	Effective neighbourhood renewal depends on services working together to plan and deliver concerted improvements in public services. Local people, business and the voluntary sector all need to have opportunities to contribute.

What will LSPs do and how will they operate?

5. Local partners will decide the full range of work of their LSP. To begin with, core tasks will be to:

- prepare and implement a **community strategy** for the area, identify and deliver the most important things which need to be done, keep track of progress, and keep it up-to-date;

¹ Government guidance was issued in December 2000 on *Preparing Community Strategies*. Details of all documents referred to here can be found in the bibliography (Annex H).

² The need for rationalisation is set out in the report on the review into Government intervention in deprived areas (GIDA), which forms chapter 23 of the 2000 Spending Review (*Prudent for a purpose: building opportunity and security for all*), published in July 2000.

³ *Local Public Service Agreements: A Prospectus for Local Authorities* was issued in July 2000.

⁴ *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*.

- bring together local **plans, partnerships and initiatives** to provide a forum through which mainstream public service providers (local authorities, the police, health services, central government agencies and so on) work effectively together to meet local needs and priorities;
- work with local authorities that are developing a local **public service agreement (PSA)** to help devise and then meet suitable targets; and
- develop and deliver a **local neighbourhood renewal strategy** to secure more jobs, better education, improved health, reduced crime, and better housing, closing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest and contributing to the national targets to tackle deprivation (set out in Box 2).

Box 2: Key PSA targets – tackling deprivation

These targets will ensure that everybody, wherever they live, can expect a minimum level of basic services.

- **Education:** Increase the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C (or equivalent) to at least 38 per cent in every LEA by 2004. A target to reduce the attainment gap at Key Stage 2 (age 11) in English and maths will be announced later in 2001.
- **Employment:** Over the three years to 2004, taking account of the economic cycle, increase the employment rates of the 30 local authority districts with the poorest initial labour market position, and reduce the difference between employment rates in these areas and the overall rate.
- **Crime:** Reduce the level of crime in deprived areas so that by 2005, no local authority area has a domestic burglary rate more than three times the national average; over the same period, reduce the national rate by 25 per cent.
- **Health:** By 2010 reduce by at least 10 per cent the gap between the 20 per cent of areas with the lowest life expectancy at birth and the population as a whole. Reduce, by at least 60 per cent by 2010, the conception rate among under 18s in the worst 20 per cent of wards, and thereby reduce the level of inequality between these areas and the average by at least 26 per cent by 2010.
- **Housing:** All social housing to be of a decent standard by 2010, with the number of families living in non-decent social housing falling by 33 per cent by 2004 and with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas.

6. For LSPs to rise to the challenges these tasks present, they will need to:
- develop a variety of means to work with and consult local people, including faith, black and minority ethnic communities;
 - build common purpose and shared commitment;
 - develop and publicise common aims and priorities;
 - value the contribution of all partners, avoiding domination by particular members or organisations;
 - share local information and good practice;

- identify, encourage and support effective local initiatives;
- develop a common performance management system;
- provide a forum for debate, discussion and common decision-making.

How will LSPs get started?

7. Local authorities are well-placed to take on the initial responsibility of bringing together key partners to establish an LSP. Many have already done so, and those that have not may be able to learn from the experience of those that have taken early steps.

8. To tackle their tasks effectively, LSPs need to secure genuine involvement from all sectors and the local community as quickly as possible. They will need to make real efforts to involve people who are traditionally under-represented, such as faith, black and minority ethnic communities. Existing strategic partnerships involving the main local players provide a good place to start. Their membership and structure may need some adjustment, especially to secure involvement from the community, voluntary organisations and business. Partnerships need to find ways to give everyone a voice on the issues that matter to them, and also recognise that not every partner will want, or be able to, be involved in all discussions.

Who should be members of the LSP?

9. The membership and size of a LSP should reflect its aims and the issues with which it is dealing. These will vary from place to place and membership should be determined locally. To ensure that they can tackle their core tasks successfully, each LSP's core membership needs to include:

- public sector organisations which serve the partnership area;
- community organisations and local people;
- voluntary organisations; and
- businesses.

Further details on membership are set out in Annex C.

10. The Government strongly encourages the involvement of local authority elected members in LSPs. Local authorities are responsible for a range of key services, and also have wide democratic responsibilities for their local communities. The involvement of other local providers of public services is equally important. Effective engagement with communities will be essential to partnerships' success. The involvement of the community sector is discussed in detail in Annex C, and Annex D sets out the details of the Community Empowerment Fund which will help to promote community involvement in LSPs serving the most deprived areas. Voluntary organisations are a key element in communities' social fabric and are often best-placed to involve people who might otherwise prove hard to reach. Businesses are significant users and suppliers of local services as well as key providers of local employment. Effective local strategic partnerships will engage with and involve all these sectors.

Who will lead LSPs?

11. Once the first steps have been taken, members of the LSP should decide who should take the lead. It may often be the local authority, but it does not have to be – any partner could

lead it. Good leadership of an LSP would inspire vision, enthusiasm and commitment, and command the trust of other partners, including local communities.

Joining up with Government Offices

12. All LSPs should establish early contact with the relevant Government Office for their region, and agree how the Government Office will work with the partnership. They should also identify as soon as possible any important statutory or non-statutory partners who appear reluctant to participate fully, and ensure they come on board. The Government Offices will be able to help where there are problems.

Opportunities for rationalisation

13. Early links should be established between LSPs and other existing partnerships, such as those dealing with crime, education, jobs, health and housing. Opportunities to rationalise membership and activities should be identified – LSPs should reduce, not add to, the time commitment expected of partners. Annex F contains a number of examples of existing partnerships, which may help to stimulate ideas about suitable arrangements in other areas.

What will central government do to help LSPs deliver?

14. It will help local strategic partnerships to succeed in a number of ways:
- local deliverers of central government services will play a full part in LSPs;
 - Government resources and programmes will help local organisations to deliver improvements in public services, and to meet the targets for health, crime, jobs, education and housing set out in Box 2;
 - well-argued proposals from effective LSPs to rationalise plans, partnerships and initiatives will meet with a positive response. Further Government proposals on the rationalisation of partnerships and plan requirements will be published in the summer;
 - the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) will provide drive in the implementation of the national strategy, and join up Whitehall to do so;
 - funds for mainstream public services have been increased substantially to improve their delivery across the board and especially in areas of deprivation;
 - the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) provides specific additional funding to support neighbourhood renewal which will be available from 2001/02 for the 88 local authority areas with the highest concentrations of deprivation and an effective LSP will be a condition for the receipt of the NRF in future years; and
 - in the same 88 areas, the Community Empowerment Fund will support community and voluntary sector activity and involvement in LSPs.

What is the role of Government Offices?

15. Government Offices will provide a direct channel of communication to Government and will act as:
- **facilitators** to support the development of LSPs;
 - **mediators** to resolve difficulties which may arise over the participation of Government agencies in LSPs, and in the negotiation of partnership and plan rationalisation proposals;

- **accreditors** to assess whether NRF grant conditions have been met and that LSPs are effective and involve genuine community participation.

What next?

16. From April 2001:

- the NRU will be operational;
- Government Offices will support local partners in the development of LSPs, and will form neighbourhood renewal teams to deal with their responsibilities under the National Strategy;
- the 88 local authority areas eligible for support from the NRF will receive the first year's funding;
- local PSA pilots will begin with 20 local authorities, and agreements with the further 130 top tier authorities (unitary, metropolitan, county, and London boroughs) will be rolled out in the following two years;
- Government Offices will work with the community and voluntary sector in deprived areas to ensure they are fully involved and participate in LSPs, and provide financial support through the Community Empowerment Fund to help achieve this.

17. In summer 2001 the Government will publish:

- the results of Departmental reviews showing how the resources allocated in the 2000 Spending Review will ensure the delivery of the key neighbourhood renewal national targets;
- proposals on the rationalisation of partnerships and plans;
- more information on accreditation for access to the NRF, and a draft NRF Special Grant Report for 2002/03 for consultation.

18. By April 2002:

- LSPs in the 88 NRF areas will have agreed their local neighbourhood renewal strategies.

Response to consultation

19. This summary, and the remainder of the guidance, takes into account the responses to the comments received on the draft guidance published last year. In particular, the final guidance emphasises even more strongly:

- the value of successful partnership working in tackling communities' problems and priorities;
- the importance of involving local people, including faith, black and minority ethnic communities; and
- central government's commitment to supporting LSPs and helping them to succeed.

20. A more detailed report on the outcome of the consultation exercise is being published separately.

CHAPTER 1

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW SHOULD THEY WORK?

Chapter summary: this chapter describes what LSPs are, why we need them, the opportunities they provide, and the conditions for success.

What are LSPs?

1.1. A local strategic partnership (LSP) is a single body that:

- 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, programmes 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 and is close enough to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be determined at community level; and
- should be aligned with local authority boundaries.

Why are they needed?

1.2. Many different organisations contribute to people's quality of life in a variety of ways – some locally, others regionally or nationally. The issues which affect local quality of life cross administrative, geographical, and organisational boundaries. An effective response therefore demands partnership working across sectors, involving not only the key public agencies but also the private, community and voluntary sectors and local people. All areas should have an LSP, not just the most deprived areas. LSPs will provide a means of tackling an area's problems, whether they are problems of failure, such as deprivation, or problems of success, such as rapid economic growth.

1.3. The review of Government intervention in deprived areas (GIDA) undertaken as part of the 2000 Spending Review concluded that, in future, core public services like education, health and the police service should become key agents in tackling deprivation. This means:

- refocusing main programmes to ensure that narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest is one of their key objectives;
- creating new and stronger co-ordinating mechanisms at the local level to enable services to work together more effectively; and
- ensuring that area-targeted initiatives provide an additional push to improve main services rather than compensating for their failings.

LSPs have a key role to play in achieving these goals.

What opportunities do LSPs provide?

1.4. LSPs provide opportunities for all participants to:

- work in **effective partnership** with the public, private, community and voluntary sectors;

- act strategically to deliver decisions and actions which **join up partners' activities** across a range of issues, enabling each of them to meet their own targets and goals and tackle cross-cutting issues more effectively;
- enable local stakeholders to address **issues which matter to local people**;
- **cut out duplication** and reduce bureaucracy by rationalising existing partnerships;
- promote **equity and inclusion** – particularly of faith, black and minority ethnic communities.

Getting started

1.5. Most local agencies already engage in a great deal of partnership working in relation to many different initiatives. Some promoted by central government; others are purely local in origin. Partnership working is particularly well-established in:

- regeneration;
- health;
- education and lifelong learning;
- tackling crime and disorder; and
- sustainable development.

1.6. It is vital that LSPs should build on approaches which already exist and work well, rather than starting from scratch.

Streamlining partnerships

1.7. LSPs present real opportunities to streamline existing partnership arrangements. They should reduce, rather than increase, the burden of 'partnership fatigue' and 'consultation fatigue' that the proliferation of separate partnerships can lead to amongst key agencies and local people.

1.8. LSPs should work with and not replace neighbourhood-level partnerships. This will ensure that LSPs make an effective contribution to the achievement of local and national priorities. LSPs should rely on the organisational structures of individual partners to deliver their objectives rather than developing executive structures of their own.

Timescales

1.9. Establishing effective and inclusive partnership working takes time. It is important to establish the right framework for the LSP as soon as possible, and especially to build meaningful community and business involvement. Supporting and encouraging sectors and local communities who need assistance to contribute to the partnership is an early key task.

1.10. Once up and running, setting themselves both interim and/or annual milestones will help LSPs to gauge their own performance. In some cases there are specific early milestones for progress; in particular, in the 88 areas eligible for grant under the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), local authorities need to demonstrate both a commitment to working with an LSP in 2001/02 and the practical results of doing so by 2002/03. More information on the NRF is set out in chapter 4 and Annex B.

Convening an LSP

1.11. Most local authorities will already be involved in many partnerships and may therefore be resourced for and experienced in the day-to-day running of broad partnerships such as LSPs. The local authority should therefore take the first steps in convening local public services, the local people, voluntary organisations and the private sector to begin the establishment of an LSP. Many have already done so.

Leading an LSP

1.12. Once the first steps have been taken, the members of the partnership should decide who should take the lead. Where LSPs are built on existing partnerships, the existing leadership arrangements may continue to be the best approach. For instance, private sector members take the lead on NCR partnerships in Lewisham and in Luton & Dunstable; Health Improvement Programmes and Health Action Zones across the country are led by the health community.

1.13. A good leader of an LSP needs to express and inspire vision and commitment from other partners and amongst local communities, and ensure that all partners have an opportunity to play a full and active part in its work. Annex E contains further information about good practice in partnership working.

Membership of an LSP

1.14. The membership, structure and size of an LSP should reflect both its aims and the breadth of issues that fall within its scope. The precise membership of any partnership will depend on local circumstances and priorities; but LSPs will only be effective if their core membership includes the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. Annex C sets out more information about engaging and involving these sectors.⁵

Leverage and commitment

1.15. To be successful, LSPs need to exhibit leadership and exercise leverage. In particular, organisational representatives need to be able to:

- take a strategic view;
- speak with authority;
- reflect the priorities and goals of their organisation/constituency;
- exert influence within their organisations in order to shape decisions, commit resources, and adjust corporate priorities and deliver the necessary changes to front line service delivery.

1.16. Genuine and visible commitment at the top of *all* partner organisations is needed to ensure that the partnership's activities are cascaded to intermediate and front-line levels. They must participate fully in delivering the LSP's agreed goals, including bending

⁵ Chapter 5 of *A New Commitment to Regeneration* provides more detail about the groups which the Government expects to be members of LSPs in areas in need of renewal.

mainstream programmes to address local priorities, especially in the most deprived areas. Public sector organisations have a particular responsibility to set an example in this regard.

1.17. Commitment and understanding at the operational level is crucial to the success of LSPs. The agreed aims and priorities – and any resulting changes in partners’ own activities – must be effectively passed down to the people who deliver the services. Better co-ordination and integration for front-line staff in all the organisations involved in an LSP should lead to practical improvements in the way that they do their jobs, leading in turn to real improvements in services.

Effective structures

1.18. LSPs must both be inclusive and able to reach agreements and make decisions. Effective discussion can be hampered by too many participants at any one session. Some existing partnerships have developed innovative ways of involving key players without having to involve all the partners all the time, for instance by establishing subgroups. LSPs and potential members of LSPs may find the examples in Annex F useful to shape their own ideas about effective working.

LSPs and local people

1.19. Involving local people and communities is vital for the successful development and implementation of community strategies and local neighbourhood renewal strategies, and key to achieving lasting improvements. There is a wealth of resources and activity within communities which are not available to the statutory sector. Individuals, groups and communities provide an untapped pool of ideas, knowledge, skills, experience, energy and enthusiasm which, if tapped, can be a real force for change.

1.20. An LSP must work for and be seen to work for the people it serves. Securing the necessary degree of community involvement will require an imaginative and flexible approach. Attention should be given at an early stage to ensuring that local communities are given the support they need to participate fully and to contribute to the design and delivery of the LSP’s approach⁶. In addition to membership of the partnership itself, a variety of methods may be successful including:

- feeding in local people’s views through other partnerships with narrower remits;
- direct consultation;
- ensuring openness and transparency in the way the LSP works, for instance by making information easily accessible and publicising its availability;
- capacity-building and training to enhance the involvement of hard-to-reach communities (including disabled people, older people, youth groups, and people from faith, black and minority ethnic communities);
- recognition of the need to facilitate greater levels of participation (implementation, self-management and so forth) at local level where this is being sought.

1.21. The Government has put in place a range of programmes to build people’s capacity to participate in measures to improve local conditions, such as the New Deal for Communities (NDC). Much has been learned, and LSPs will want to draw upon the experience available

⁶ The Community Development Foundation published information in December 2000 on involving local people in community strategies. Details are provided in the bibliography (Annex H).

and emerging best practice. In particular, LSPs should agree protocols to ensure that local people are involved in the design and delivery of relevant programmes which affect their communities.

1.22. Effective community participation will be a vital factor in the success of LSPs, and will be evaluated by Government Offices for purposes such as accreditation for receipt of NRF grant (see paragraph 2.6). Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and regional NHS offices will be in a position to assist in this process. Further details on accreditation criteria will be published in the summer.

Rural communities

1.23. In rural areas, accountable parish and town councils can make an important contribution to the work of LSPs, feeding into the establishment of the long-term vision and identifying local priorities to be contained in the community strategy. They can also help to implement the strategy, although their capacity to do so will vary from council to council. The Quality Town and Parish councils proposed in the Rural White Paper, for instance, could make a significant contribution. The role that parish and town councils play should therefore be a matter for local discussion between those councils and the relevant LSP.

Existing community networks

1.24. The Councils for Voluntary Service, Rural Community Councils, Volunteer Bureaux, Community Development Agencies, Development Trusts and other community support organisations provide a range of technical assistance, know-how and practical help to the voluntary and community sectors. They also set up and support forums and networks which can help local people participate in partnerships. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and local authorities fund over a hundred racial equality councils which promote racial equality, tackle racial discrimination, and provide advice and support to minority ethnic communities. Inter-faith initiatives such as Councils of Faith or Multi-Faith Forums can provide valuable links to faith communities, which may be amongst those least likely to be reached by traditional methods of consultation. A local compact can provide a useful framework within which the relationship between the community and voluntary sector and other partners can be defined and delivered.

1.25. LSPs should draw on these existing networks. They should also make sure that local people are able to feed in directly to the development of their strategies. Partners should work together to clarify the capacity-building role of these organisations and find ways in which they can be resourced and funded. Details of the new Community Empowerment Fund, which will be available to support the involvement of community and voluntary groups in LSPs in the 88 areas eligible for the NRF, are set out in Annex D.

Geographical extent and boundaries

1.26. LSPs will need to align with local authority boundaries. But that does not mean that there should be a separate partnership for each local authority area. Partnerships need to operate at a level which allows strategic choices and decisions to be made, while at the same time providing close enough linkages to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be

determined at community level. LSPs will, therefore, want to consider carefully what is the most effective approach for all the potential partners and the most appropriate level for dealing with particular issues and priorities. They may find it useful to bear in mind the geographical coverage of existing effective partnerships. Annex F sets out a range of examples of existing partnership working structures, which include a variety of structures for working relationships between local authorities in different areas.

1.27. The establishment of an effective LSP will present particular challenges in areas with both county and district councils. Economic, health and employment issues often cut across administrative boundaries, and the services delivered at county and district level each make an important contribution to local quality of life. Counties and districts will thus need to consider how best to establish the LSP arrangements which most effectively address local priorities. Without this, not only is action taken less likely to be successful, but there will be duplication of effort, conflicting priorities and consultation/partnership fatigue, and councils will quickly lose credibility both with local partners and the public.

1.28. LSPs in all areas will need to consider whether they could be most effective by working across more than one local authority area. A single community strategy can cover several authorities' areas of responsibility. Similarly, the most effective approach for some neighbouring authorities with similar priorities and circumstances may be to work together with partners and local people within a single LSP framework. In order to achieve a sufficiently strategic approach, joint working between shire districts and county councils will be essential, and individual districts may find it more effective to work with neighbouring authorities and with partner organisations across a shared area.

1.29. Local authorities now have powers⁷ to act outside their own area if that action contributes to well-being in their own area. This opens up the scope for:

- more collaborative working within LSPs;
- co-operation between neighbouring LSPs;
- initiatives at the regional, cross-regional and sub-regional level (such as the provision of sub-regional leisure facilities, or to address issues which cross administrative boundaries such as the prevention of pollution and the conservation of biodiversity).

Regional context

1.30. LSPs need to operate within the context of wider regional frameworks. Clear and effective working relationships between LSPs and sub-regional partnerships is vital. Roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined, and strategies and priorities need to be developed and taken forward at regional, local and neighbourhood level.

Relations between members of the LSP

1.31. LSPs are collaborative partnerships where each member is an equal partner. Each partner will have a different contribution to make, and their worth needs to be acknowledged. Resources, responsibilities and duties may differ, but the value to the LSP of each partner has to be recognised. Better-resourced partners should support the involvement of the less well-

⁷ Included in section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, which gives principal local authorities a broad power to promote or improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of their area.

resourced. LSPs will not succeed if one or a small number of the partners are perceived as dominant.

Accountability

1.32. Individual partners will remain responsible and accountable for decisions on their services and resources. Delivering an LSP's common goals will depend on its ability to demonstrate to individual partners that it can help them to achieve their individual goals. This sort of joint working is seen in the Health Improvement Programmes where local authorities contribute to a number of centrally driven goals.

1.33. Where an individual partner has goals primarily set by central government, the LSP should identify the appropriate contribution that other members of the partnership can make to achieving those goals. Where local and regional or national priorities are not aligned – either in respect of specific outcomes or resource implications – the Government Offices are in the best position to mediate.

1.34. LSPs need to operate within a transparent and robust framework of local accountability. The organisations participating in the partnership already have established lines of accountability, to their own customers and in some cases to the wider community. LSPs' accountability arrangements need to build on these. Information on effective accountability arrangements is included in Annex E.

Performance management

1.35. Partners will need to know how well the partnership is performing. The LSP will need to establish a capacity to monitor and publicise its achievements. In relation to work on community strategies, the key elements of a strategy must include mechanisms for monitoring and reporting progress to the partnership and local people (see paragraph 3.4).

Summary

1.36. In summary, LSPs must:

- involve the communities they serve;
- bring together the public, private, community and voluntary sectors;
- operate at a level where strategic decisions on policy choices and resources are made;
- be effectively led;
- work as genuine partnerships;
- ensure that their priorities are reflected in delivery of service at operational level;
- take a strategic role in the co-ordination of action towards local and national targets;
- be accountable to local people.

1.37. To achieve this they will need to:

- develop a variety of means to work with and consult local people, including faith, black and minority ethnic communities;
- build common purpose and shared commitment;
- develop and publicise common aims and priorities;

- value the contribution of all partners, avoiding domination by particular members or organisations;
- share local information and good practice;
- identify, encourage and support effective local initiatives;
- develop a common performance management system;
- provide a forum for debate, discussion, and common decision-making.

CHAPTER 2

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO MAKING LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS A SUCCESS

Chapter summary: This chapter sets out how central government will provide the right incentives and support to ensure that LSPs succeed.

Ensuring public agency involvement in LSPs

2.1. Central government will establish the right conditions for LSPs to take a genuinely joined-up approach. It will encourage all public sector agencies to participate in LSPs. Central policy Departments will work with their local agencies to ensure that they play a full part in the partnerships in their areas. Information about the statutory agencies, and members of other sectors, who could be involved in LSPs is set out in Annex C.

Government Office support

2.2. Following the Performance and Innovation Unit's *Reaching Out* report on the role of central government at regional and local level, the role of Government Offices is being strengthened and extended. In relation to LSPs, they will act as:

- facilitators;
- mediators;
- accreditors.

2.3. New resources and support from other parts of central government, particularly the Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU), will help them with this task and enable them to develop and improve their skills and knowledge to successfully fulfil their new role.

2.4. In their role as **facilitators** and **mediators** Government Offices will:

- offer advice to local partners still in the early stages of setting up an LSP and provide information on networks and partnership working arrangements already in place;
- encourage the relevant agencies in particular areas to establish an LSP and instigate action where the impetus is lacking. Where local partners, from whichever sector, are unable to engage individual local service providers, they should raise this in the first instance with the Government Office;
- ensure that other parts of central government participate fully in relevant partnership structures, supported by the RCU;
- make links between LSPs and regional organisations such as the RDAs, regional chambers, local Learning & Skills Councils, regional cultural consortiums, the NHS and Social Care regions, the Regional Voluntary Sector Networks and other regional and sub-regional frameworks and strategies. In some areas such regional organisations will already have good existing working relationships and links, and may themselves be members of LSPs;
- help to address local concerns about the performance of LSPs or individual partners;

- become a point of contact for sharing good practice across the region, building up an awareness of existing and emerging good practice in partnership working; and
- mediate between partners if and when conflicts arise once partnerships are established.

2.5. In their role as **accreditors**, the Government Offices will:

- evaluate and accredit LSPs in the 88 local authority areas eligible for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF);
- advise Ministers on how far LSPs meet the agreed requirements; and
- provide Ministers with advice about the progress of LSPs across the region.

Further information and guidance on the NRF is set out in Annex B.

Accreditation

2.6. Accreditation will depend on LSPs demonstrating that they:

- they are effective, representative, and capable of playing a key strategic role;
- they actively involve all the key players, including the public, private, community and voluntary sectors;
- they have established genuine common local priorities and targets and agreed actions and milestones leading to demonstrable improvements against measurable baselines;
- members have aligned their performance management systems, criteria and processes to that of the LSP;
- they reduce, not add to, the ‘bureaucratic burden’; and
- they build on best practice from successful partnerships by drawing on experiences of regional structures and national agencies.

2.7. The precise way that these requirements are met will vary from area to area, depending on local circumstances. And, as good practice emerges from LSPs, these requirements are likely to evolve over time. Further information on the accreditation criteria and process will be published in the summer.

2.8. Any concerns about the requirements or the accreditation process should be raised with Government Offices at an early stage.

Regional Development Agencies

2.9. The RDAs are required to take an integrated and sustainable approach to regional economic issues. They produce regional economic strategies and work with partners to deliver improved economic performance by:

- enhancing the regions’ competitiveness;
- addressing market failures; and
- tackling the underlying problems of unemployment, skills shortages, inequalities, social exclusion and physical decay.

2.10. Regional economic strategies prioritise areas that justify action at the regional level. Delivery of them will be at the sub-regional and local level. The vision set out in the relevant RDA’s regional strategy will be part of the framework within which LSPs will need to work. Equally, local priorities and actions identified by LSPs should inform the development of regional economic strategies.

Rationalising partnerships

2.11. LSPs provide the opportunity to streamline and rationalise the numerous partnerships that have been set up at the local level, and thus address a central concern of local people. Central government requirements on partnerships for planning, accountability, monitoring and evaluation can differ between programmes and initiatives, reflecting their different focus. The cumulative effect can often be burdensome and hinder effective partnership working.

2.12. Central government is actively looking for opportunities to rationalise the partnership requirements it makes of local agencies. It will publish proposals in the summer on action to be taken centrally to rationalise partnerships and the plans that are required of them. Annex A sets out the early steps that Departments are taking to rationalise existing partnerships. The Government will also respond positively to proposals from effective LSPs to rationalise partnerships, the plans they produce and other local initiatives. LSPs will need to meet certain minimum criteria to demonstrate their effectiveness (as set out in paragraph 2.6 above). Assessments will be based on the same criteria as those used to accredit LSPs for the receipt of NRF grant.

2.13. Where existing partnerships relate to a statutory requirement to prepare a plan, the Government has new powers⁸ to exempt local authorities from certain statutory plan-making requirements where they can demonstrate it is in the best interest of the area to do so. As part of the local PSA pilot programme, the Department for Education and Employment and the Department of Health have agreed to work with some of the local authority pilots to explore how to consolidate and rationalise existing plan requirements for authorities with education and social services responsibilities. Details are included in Annex A.

2.14. Central government's approach to future partnership working requirements needs to be compatible with the establishment of LSPs. Under new procedures operated by the RCU, Departments planning new or extended area-based initiatives must:

- justify partnership arrangements; and
- demonstrate how they will work with LSPs.

Other freedoms and flexibilities

2.15. The Government is keen to remove other unnecessary barriers and burdens on partners that prevent them from working together successfully. LSPs will have a role in contributing to the development of local PSAs as these are rolled out to 'top tier' local authorities from 2002/03 (county councils, metropolitan districts, London boroughs and unitary authorities). LSPs will be able to develop requests for operational freedoms and flexibilities for the authority to negotiate on their behalf in the local PSA. Any such requests will need to demonstrate the anticipated beneficial effect on outcomes.

2.16. In considering such proposals, central government will take into account:

- the outcomes which existing arrangements were intended to achieve;
- the effectiveness of the LSP; and
- the lessons learnt from the local PSA pilot programme.

⁸ s.6 of the Local Government Act 2000.

2.17. The Government already has new powers⁹ to amend statutory requirements which would otherwise prevent local authorities from acting to improve the well-being of their areas. Where it becomes clear (through local PSA negotiations or otherwise) that there are redundant restrictions or other legislative barriers which prevent local authorities from using these powers effectively, the Government can amend the legislation for some or all areas. In doing so, the Government will need to consider the timing and frequency with which orders are placed before and debated by Parliament.

⁹ s.5 of the Local Government Act 2000.

CHAPTER 3

CROSS-CUTTING RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Chapter summary: This chapter sets out how LSPs in all areas will have cross-cutting responsibilities to improve the delivery of mainstream services and respond to people's needs and aspirations for their area.

Community strategies

3.1. Tackling the problems and fulfilling the potential of our towns and cities requires integrated action on planning and design, the urban environment, land use, economic regeneration and employment, police, education, health and other local services. LSPs and the community strategies they develop and implement provide the best framework for working out and putting into practice the changes that are needed.

3.2. The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities in England and Wales to prepare a community strategy to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and its inhabitants. Community strategies will provide:

- an integrated approach to the sustainable economic, social and physical development of our cities, towns and rural areas; and
- a clear strategy and vision for the future.

3.3. The statutory duty for preparing community strategies rests with local authorities. However, their development and implementation requires successful joint working across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. And the statutory guidance on preparing community strategies, published in December 2000, put LSPs at the centre of the community planning process.

3.4. Community strategies must include:

- a long-term vision for the area, focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;
- an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;
- a shared commitment to implement the action plan and proposals for doing so; and
- arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing the community strategy, and for reporting progress to local people.

3.5. In rural areas greater integration of services, joint use of service outlets, and innovative solutions and delivery methods building on modern technology are particularly important in overcoming the problems confronted by dispersed communities. LSPs and community strategies can provide the framework for:

- better co-ordination between service providers at the local village and market town level;
- targeting services to tackle rural social exclusion; and
- strategies for diversifying and regenerating rural economies.

3.6. LSPs will need good mechanisms to engage with village communities and their parish councils if they are to be effective (see paragraph 1.23).

3.7. In urban and rural areas with deprived communities the involvement of the LSP in preparing and implementing both the community strategy and the local neighbourhood renewal strategy will ensure that links are made between local and neighbourhood priorities.

Co-ordinating and rationalising partnerships

3.8. A key task for LSPs will be to create and exploit opportunities to:

- simplify and where possible reduce the number of separate partnerships in which local partners are engaged, since the same key partners are likely to be involved in a number of different high-level partnerships;
- improve the links between local partnerships so that they know how they fit into the wider picture, and enhance rather than cut across the achievement of one another's objectives;
- move to more straightforward structures and working arrangements where it makes sense to do so. For example, the Department of Health recommends that the planning of services for vulnerable children should be undertaken by children and young people's strategic partnerships, which could then operate as a subset of the LSP;
- integrate new work which would benefit from a partnership approach. Successful LSPs are likely to be the starting point for co-ordinating new partnership working arrangements, thus avoiding the need to create further separate high-level partnership arrangements.

Involvement in the development and delivery of local Public Service Agreements

3.9. Local PSAs offer local authorities the opportunity to commit themselves to delivering key national and local priorities in return for agreed operational flexibilities and pump-priming grants of up to £1 million each. They will also receive Performance Reward Grants of 2.5 per cent of their budget in 2000/01, if they meet their targets. Local PSAs are being piloted in 20 areas in 2001/02 and will be rolled out to other county councils, metropolitan districts, London boroughs and unitary authorities from 2002/03.

3.10. The local priorities proposed by councils must be important to, and supported by, local people and partners. And the national targets in the key areas of health, education, crime, employment and social housing will require close working between partners. The LSP will therefore provide both a forum in which to agree priorities with key partners and local people, and an opportunity to agree the actions necessary to deliver them.

CHAPTER 4

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

Chapter summary: This chapter sets out the key elements of the National Strategy Action Plan where there is a role for LSPs.

Introduction

4.1. Following extensive consultation, the Government published in January 2001 *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: the National Strategy Action Plan* to take forward the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. In the action plan, LSPs are seen as the vehicle for implementing and leading neighbourhood renewal. They will be in a good position to:

- identify priority neighbourhoods;
- identify and understand the problems of those priority neighbourhoods;
- map resources going into priority neighbourhoods;
- agree on what more needs to be done; and
- implement and monitor agreed action.

4.2. The action plan sets out the new policies, funding and targets which will drive neighbourhood renewal in the key areas of education, jobs, health, housing, and crime. In addition to a wide range of initiatives and investment across England to address these policy issues, the Government is supporting renewal in the 88 most deprived local authority districts with Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) grant for better public services over the next three years.

4.3. This chapter sets out the key elements of the action plan in which there is a role for LSPs, including:

- local neighbourhood renewal strategies;
- the NRF;
- the Community Empowerment Fund (CEF);
- neighbourhood management;
- skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal.

4.4. The Government has set specific targets to start narrowing the gap between the most deprived areas and the rest of the country in the key areas of education, employment, health, crime and social housing:

- In **education**, the Government will increase the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C (or equivalent) to at least 38 per cent in every local education authority (and at least 25 per cent in each school) by 2004. A further target will be set later in 2001 to ensure that no authority has fewer than a set percentage of pupils achieving the expected standards of literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 2 (age 11).
- Over the three years to 2004, taking account of the economic cycle, the Government will ensure an increase in the **employment** rates of the 30 local authority districts with the poorest initial labour market position. It will ensure a reduction in the difference between employment rates in these areas and the overall rate.

- The Government will reduce the level of **crime** in deprived areas so that by 2005, no local authority area has a domestic burglary rate more than three times the national average – while at the same time reducing the national rate by 25 per cent.
- To tackle **health** inequalities, by 2010 the Government will reduce by at least 10 per cent the gap between the 20 per cent of areas with the lowest life expectancy at birth and the population as a whole. The Government will also reduce, by at least 60 per cent by 2010, the conception rate among under 18s in the worst 20 per cent of wards, thereby reducing the level of inequality between these areas and the average by at least 26 per cent by 2010.
- The Government will ensure that all social **housing** is of a decent standard by 2010 with the number of families living in non-decent social housing falling by 33 per cent by 2004, and with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas.

Developing and implementing local neighbourhood renewal strategies

4.5. The key task for LSPs in the context of neighbourhood renewal is to prepare a local neighbourhood renewal strategy. This strategy should:

- set out an agreed vision and plan for positive change in as many neighbourhoods as are in need of renewal;
- have the agreement and commitment of all the key people and institutions who have a stake in the neighbourhood, or have an impact on it;
- clearly set out a local strategic level framework for action that responds to neighbourhood needs and puts them in the context of the area as a whole;
- include plans for action to equip those involved in neighbourhood renewal with the skills and knowledge they need.

4.6. LSPs would be expected to set targets for how things should change over time in their most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, especially in terms of the key outcomes of reducing unemployment and crime and raising educational attainment, health, housing and the physical environment. LSPs will contribute to achieving national targets by taking action to make improvements locally.

4.7. Figure 1 overleaf sets out the processes which an LSP might use for developing and implementing a local neighbourhood renewal strategy.

Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

4.8. The NRF provides new money for local authorities in the 88 most deprived areas, amounting to £200 million in 2001/02, £300 million in 2002/03, and £400 million in 2003/04. It is intended as a way to help local authorities and their partners to begin improving services in the most deprived neighbourhoods, including contributing to the achievement of PSA targets to narrow the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the country.

4.9. The NRF can be spent in any way that will tackle deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods. The money can be spent on improving services – particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to the targets set out in paragraph 4.4 above. It is both acceptable, and strongly desirable where service quality is at risk or requires improvement, that NRF funding should be devoted to mainstream services such as schools, health services and the police – provided that the funding benefits the most deprived areas. The grant can be used to support

services provided not only by the local authority, but also by organisations that are members of the LSP and by others.



Figure 1: Key steps in developing a local neighbourhood renewal strategy

4.10. Further information about the NRF can be found in the specific supplementary guidance set out in Annex B and in the Special Grant Report to the House of Commons (no.78) which was published on 15 March 2001.

4.11. The grant conditions include the requirements that authorities receiving NRF resources:

- must be part of and working with an LSP;
- must have agreed within the LSP a local neighbourhood renewal strategy (see paragraphs 4.5 – 4.7 above); and
- must produce each year a statement of use for the funding and agree it with the LSP, who will want assurance that the NRF resources are contributing to their wider strategy for tackling deprivation.

These conditions are varied for the first year, in recognition that it takes time to put an LSP in place; the authorities have been asked to make commitments to working with an LSP and agreeing a local neighbourhood renewal strategy with them.

4.12. As *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*¹⁰ makes clear, effective engagement with the community is one of the most important aspects of LSPs' work, and they will have failed if they do not deliver this. The CEF will provide £36 million over the next three years to each of the 88 NRF areas to support community and voluntary sector participation in LSPs. It will be allocated to the community and voluntary sectors through the Government Offices in the regions. Further details can be found in Annex D.

4.13. LSPs will have to be accredited by their Government Office to be eligible for NRF from 2002/03. For LSPs to be accredited, they will have to demonstrate that they are effective. Accreditation is covered in more detail in paragraphs 2.5 – 2.8 and Annex B, with general criteria to be used for accrediting LSPs in paragraph 2.6. Further advice will be issued in the summer. The NRF will be administered by the new Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) in DETR; the NRU will work closely with Government Offices.

Overseeing and supporting development of neighbourhood management

4.14. All LSPs will need to complement their strategic activity with a focus on its impact at neighbourhood level. One model for this is neighbourhood management, which is already being supported by local authorities, NDC partnerships and others in several areas across the country. To test out new ideas and approaches to neighbourhood management, the Government will be supporting at least two rounds of pathfinders over the next three years, under a separate initiative with new funding of £45 million.

4.15. Neighbourhood management involves devolving power down to an individual, team or single neighbourhood organisation. Neighbourhood managers will be responsible for co-ordinating services at the very local level (a single estate or a few thousand houses), including negotiating with service providers about the services they run and feeding the neighbourhood's views into higher tiers of government. Their activities could include making service level agreements, running local services or managing a devolved budget. Most people identify with the things that affect their immediate neighbourhood; the LSP's strategy for consulting and involving local communities will clearly need to address people's needs and aspirations for their neighbourhoods, and link closely with the neighbourhood management approach where it is being tried out.

4.16. LSPs offer an obvious route through which neighbourhood managers can exercise influence over main programmes which impact upon the neighbourhood level. The partnerships will be in a position to ensure that partner agencies prioritise key neighbourhoods, participate in neighbourhood renewal and perform in terms of achieving agreed neighbourhood goals; they should also be in a position to support negotiations between neighbourhood managers and individual service providers.

Skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal

¹⁰ Paragraph 5.28.

4.17. There needs to be a step change in the level of skills and knowledge of everyone involved in neighbourhood renewal. The NDC programme has shown that local commitment to learning is vital, to complement national and regional learning initiatives. There will be a Skills & Knowledge team in the NRU, and strong regional and local elements. This drive to improve skills and knowledge relates specifically to those involved in neighbourhood renewal or whose work affects key neighbourhood renewal outcomes. It will thus cover residents who are involved in neighbourhood renewal, but it also needs to support learning for people working in public agencies (and others) whose work influences the neighbourhood renewal agenda locally.

4.18. Policy Action Team 16, which looked at the skills needed for neighbourhood renewal, identified a number of core skills, including:

- working with communities (for paid workers);
- partnership working;
- programme and project design and management;
- team building, leadership and management;
- problem solving;
- finance;
- risk-taking;
- listening and learning from others;
- conflict management;
- accessing knowledge about ‘what works’;
- building skills within community organisations.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. The precise mix of skills required in each neighbourhood and district will vary. People locally will be best placed to decide what skills are required and where there are gaps in the skills and knowledge of those involved in renewing deprived neighbourhoods.

4.19. As part of their work on neighbourhood renewal, all LSPs should make sure that there are programmes of local action to improve the skills and knowledge of all those involved. Specifically, there should be a section about ‘local action on learning for neighbourhood renewal’ in every local neighbourhood renewal strategy. The partnership need not organise or initiate these learning programmes itself, although it may choose to do so in some cases. In practice, learning opportunities would probably include the following:

- learning programmes devised at neighbourhood level, for those involved in a neighbourhood partnership (learning at neighbourhood level will sometimes be most effective – among other things, it gives participants a sense of team, as people learn together);
- specific training for individual professions (being equipped for working in deprived neighbourhoods, as part of their continuing professional development);
- mixed-group learning (different stakeholders learning together);
- support for individual learning (by day-release, distance learning, and so on) to acquire skills and knowledge needed for neighbourhood renewal;
- tapping into national and regional learning opportunities and resources;
- the systematic and ongoing use of expert advice;
- support to enable residents to learn from each other by passing on experience and expertise.