

# **Developing a 'Theory of Change' to Evaluate Local Public Service Agreements**

---

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

Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU  
Telephone: 020 7944 4400  
Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

Documents downloaded from the [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) website are *Crown Copyright* unless otherwise stated, in which case copyright is assigned to *Queens Printer and Controller of Her Majestys Stationery Office*.

*Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.*

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

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

This publication is only available online via the Communities and Local Government website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

**Alternative formats under Disability Discrimination Act (DDA):** if you require this publication in an alternative format please email [alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

Although this report was commissioned by the Office, the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## **Contents**

Front Cover

Summary

[Evaluation context.](#)

[Theories of Change.](#)

[Theories of Change and LPSA](#)

[Developing a ToC for LPSAs](#)

[Factors supporting/inhibiting the operation of the Theory of Change](#)

[Using the Theory of Change in the LPSA evaluation](#)

1. Introduction

2. 'Theories of Change' in evaluation research

[2.1. The Principles of ToC](#)

[2.2. Implementing a ToC approach](#)

3. ToC and LPSAs

[3.1. Generating a ToC for LPSA](#)

References

Although this report was commissioned by the Office, the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## Front Cover

Helen Sullivan, University of the West of England: Bristol

Gillian Gillanders, Sue Goss and Jane Steele, Office for Public Management: London

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London

### *Further Information for Authors:*

Helen Sullivan  
University of the West of England: Bristol  
Helen.Sullivan@uwe.ac.uk

*The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the consultant authors and do not necessarily represent the views or proposed policies of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.*

*Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU  
Tel: 020 7944 4400  
Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)*

© Queen's Printers and controller of Her Majesty's Stationery

*Copyright in the typographical arrangements rest 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@hmso.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@hmso.gov.uk)*

May 2004.

Although this report was commissioned by the Office, the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## Summary

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has commissioned an evaluation of Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) which is being undertaken by the Office for Public Management, the University of the West of England and the University of Cardiff. The key objective of the evaluation is to provide a robust and representative evaluation of the impact and outcome of LPSAs, and the extent to which they have delivered substantial improvements in key services over and above what otherwise would have been achieved. The evaluation is in two stages - a five month development phase (March 2003 - September 2003) and the main evaluation (October 2003 - 2007). During the development phase the evaluators explored the potential contribution of the Aspen Institute's 'Theories of Change' approach to the developing evaluation framework (Aspen Institute, 1995). This paper describes and discusses the Aspen Institute's approach and identifies its utility to the LPSA evaluation. It then outlines the evaluation team's work to date in constructing a 'Theory of Change' for the LPSA.

## Evaluation context.

In the prevailing environment established methods oriented approaches to evaluation may be insufficient, requiring evaluators to focus on the potential contribution of theory-driven approaches. 'Theories of Change' (ToC) is one manifestation of the theory-driven approach and recent UK policy evaluations have engaged with this approach including the evaluation of Health Action Zones (HAZ), of New Deal for Communities (NDC) and of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP).

## Theories of Change.

A theory of change evaluation is described as, "a systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and contexts of the initiative" (Kubisch and Connell eds. 1998 pp15-44), or a theory of how and why an initiative works. It is a hybrid of process and outcomes analyses which is used without a comparison group to explore behaviours and outcomes that are not easily measurable.

Central to a ToC evaluation is the requirement that the evaluator 'surface' the implicit theory of action inherent in a proposed intervention in order to delineate what should happen if the theory is correct and to identify short, medium and long term indicators of changes which can provide evidence on which to base evaluative judgements. The development of a ToC must involve all relevant stakeholders who need to reach a consensus about the ToC to be applied and the ToC needs to be able to delineate change at all levels from strategic to that of individual projects.

Supporters of the ToC approach argue that it has a number of benefits. The emphasis on the

prospective specification of goals, targets and activities is argued to facilitate measurement and data collection by clearly indicating which elements are important for the evaluation, thereby also enabling the targeting of scarce evaluation resources. The ToC focus on context supports stakeholder learning about what works in what circumstances so producing more useful policy learning and the close involvement of stakeholders in the processes of prospective specification reduces problems of attribution so facilitating greater confidence in the subsequent evaluation findings.

ToC has strong linkages with other more well known approaches to evaluation including: process-outcomes evaluation, responsive/interactive evaluation and realistic evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). However, the experiences of UK evaluators in utilising ToC in Area Based Initiatives (ABIs) suggests a range of practical, political and theoretical factors that can act to limit the utility of ToC in practice (Sullivan et al, 2002).

### Theories of Change and LPSA

The adoption of a ToC approach to the evaluation of LPSAs fits well with the key features of this policy instrument. The involvement of both central and local stakeholders in the design and agreement of the LPSA is contained within the ToC's focus on multiple stakeholders; the use of the LPSA as a means of improving the attainment of priority outcomes via the specification and delivery of a number of agreed performance targets is at the heart of the ToC approach which requires the prospective specification of targets and milestones for every intervention; and the connections that exist between the achievement of local and national priorities that comprise the main part of the LPSA reflect the ToC's emphasis on the multi-layered nature of change.

However, there are implications for LPSAs of the adoption of the ToC approach. These include: the need to specify exactly who the stakeholders are and how they have been involved, the importance of understanding the assumptions and rationales that underpin agreed actions, the requirement to establish the nature and quality of evidence that informs the selection of specific activities, targets and milestones as it is this evidence that will be drawn upon in assessing progress towards the goals outlined in the ToC and the importance of determining the depth of any multi-layering i.e. the links that exist between a ToC for LPSA at a national policy level and ToCs that may pertain at local authority level

### Developing a ToC for LPSAs

Drawing on a variety of evaluation sources, the research team have devised an outline ToC for LPSAs (*at national policy level*). Sources included: data from the evaluation of the pilot LPSAs, documentary analysis of LPSA related policy and performance papers and interviews with a sample of key central and local stakeholders, as well as actors in three pilot case studies undertaken as part of the development phase of the full evaluation. The ToC was revised following a workshop event involving a core group of central and local government stakeholders.

The outline ToC delineates the ways in which *context* has been significant in determining the direction and impact of the LPSA and also describes how key contextual factors have changed

over time. At the inception of the LPSA initiative the evidence suggested contextual pressures emanating primarily from central government but with some complementary impetus from local authorities and an important role being played by the LGA. The initial experiences of the pilot LPSAs demonstrated the significance of local context in influencing local authorities' approach to and experience of implementation of the initiative (OPM, 2001). Although the policy remained largely unchanged from the pilot to the roll-out phase, as the scheme rolled out there were changes in the understanding both locally and centrally of what the policy might achieve and how, as differently motivated authorities became involved and as expectations changed as a result of early experiences. The relative importance of all these contextual factors and their impact will be explored during the course of the research.

Several long term *goals/outcomes* were associated with LPSAs although there was consensus amongst respondents that the achievement of sustained improvements in local service delivery to meet priority outcomes was the fundamental goal.

A variety of underlying *assumptions* that informed the design and development of the LPSA and its operation were identified for both central and local government, some of which were complementary and others which existed in tension with each other. These were subsequently developed into a set of change mechanisms linking the policy instrument (the LPSA) to the specified outcomes.

A number of *propositions for change* were elaborated generating a ToC with three distinct but related aspects, a minimum, medium and maximum theory. In the minimum ToC, the focus is on short term change within specific local service areas to achieve specified targets. There is little expectation that change will be long lasting or widespread. The medium ToC envisages LPSAs as stimulating much broader and deeper structural and cultural change in localities involving local authorities and their partners and leading to longer term sustainable service improvements. Finally the maximum ToC delineates change at both local and national levels leading to better policy and regulation and contributing to the achievement of 'joined-up' government.

The ToC identified a number of short and medium *change mechanisms* which either marked stages along the ToC route or helped to explain progress between different stages of the ToC. These mechanisms take effect at different stages pre and post the negotiation and agreement of the LPSA and they individually and collectively contribute to the nature and impact (short, medium and long term) of the LPSA within localities and between localities and central government.

### **Factors supporting/inhibiting the operation of the Theory of Change**

The ToC outlines what *should* happen if the theory is correct. However, there are a number of factors which may interfere with the operation of the ToC, supporting and/or inhibiting change and sometimes requiring the ToC to be revised as a result of experience. Evaluation data generated so far suggests that there are important factors in the environment which may impact upon the implementation of the LPSA to either facilitate or inhibit it. These factors pertain both to the structures, cultures and processes of central and local government but also to elements in the wider policy, political and socio-economic contexts of these institutions.

## **Using the Theory of Change in the LPSA evaluation**

The ToC described above provides a framework for generating hypotheses and questions for the qualitative and quantitative research to be undertaken in the main phase of the evaluation. These activities combined with regular reports to government will provide opportunities to review findings against the ToC in order to assess the emerging similarities and differences between theory and practice and make judgements about any implications for the evaluation.

Although this report was commissioned by the Office, the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## 1. Introduction

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has commissioned a major long term evaluation of Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) which is being carried out by the Office for Public Management, the University of the West of England and the University of Cardiff. The prime objective of this evaluation is to provide a robust and representative assessment of the impact and outcome of LPSAs, and the extent to which they have delivered substantial improvements in key services over and above what otherwise would have been achieved. A secondary objective is to evaluate the processes of negotiation and more particularly implementation of LPSAs, to enable central government and local authorities to better understand and, if necessary, modify their approaches to the ways in which they negotiate and implement LPSAs.

The evaluation has two stages - a five month development phase (March 2003 - September 2003) and the main evaluation (October 2003 - 2007). During the development phase a theoretical model of the processes through which LPSAs are expected to bring about improvement was devised and a detailed evaluation plan drawn up. This was informed by 'Theories of Change', an approach to evaluation that begins from the perspective that public policy operates in, and has to take account of, a complex and dynamic context, and facilitates the evaluation of the relationship between implementation and impact in that context. This paper examines the potential contribution of 'Theories of Change' in evaluation research and outlines how the research team adapted and applied this approach in developing an analytical framework for the evaluation of LPSAs.

Although this report was commissioned by the Office, the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## 2. 'Theories of Change' in evaluation research

The development and effective implementation of public policy programmes has become increasingly difficult in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the power and capacity of the state has been challenged in a number of ways e.g. by the forces of globalisation, the dominance of the new public management agenda and the emergence of seemingly more complex and intractable policy problems such as social exclusion (Pierre and Peters 2000, Skelcher, 2000). The combination of these features has required the development of policy interventions that are dynamic, have a high level of complexity and are able to embrace diversity in stakeholders, geography and organisation (Kooiman, 1993). It has also urged public policy into a new paradigm where the emphasis is on the state developing a role as an enabler of 'joined-up' governance to achieve positive outcomes (Richards et al, 1999).

These challenges to policy makers are paralleled in relation to evaluation. Evaluators need to develop frameworks that are able to engage with dynamics, diversity and complexity and the established methods oriented approaches may be insufficient here, requiring instead a focus on the potential contribution of theory driven approaches to provide what Chen terms 'an adequate conceptual framework' for evaluation (1990:293). 'Theories of Change' (ToC) is one manifestation of the theory-driven approach used to evaluate complex public policy interventions because of its apparent capacity to accommodate multi-sector activity (diversity), its explicit concern with the relationship between process and outcomes (dynamics) and its emphasis upon wholesale change at individual, organisational and system levels (complexity) (Connell and Kubisch 1998).

Policy evaluations in the UK have in recent years espoused a ToC approach, building on the work of the Aspen Round Table. Thus evaluation of Health Action Zones (HAZ), of New Deal for Communities (NDC) and of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) have all begun to engage with a literature which has for many years been predominantly grounded in a north American context (Sullivan and Stewart, 2003). Below the key principles of ToC are outlined and the implications for the evaluation of Local Public Service Agreements are explored.

### 2.1. The Principles of ToC

A theory of change evaluation is:

"A systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and contexts of the initiative" (Kubisch and Connell eds. 1998 pp15-44)

Or

A theory of how and why an initiative works

It is a hybrid of process and outcomes analyses which is used without a comparison group to explore behaviours and outcomes that are not easily measurable. It requires an articulation of short and long term goals and assumptions about: what types of interventions lead to specified consequences that result in the desired short and long term goals.

ToC was devised to meet the need for an evaluative approach that could accommodate the multi-level and many dimensional impacts of developing social and public policy interventions in north America, the so-called 'Complex Community Initiatives' (CCIs) (Aspen Institute, 1997). CCIs aimed to promote positive change in individual, family and community circumstances through the development of a variety of mechanisms to improve social, economic and physical circumstances, services and conditions in disadvantaged communities. In doing this CCIs placed a strong emphasis on community building and neighbourhood empowerment.

Consequently CCIs posed a number of challenges to conventional approaches to evaluation as: initiatives have multiple goals which change over time, they are highly complex with multi-stranded activity and they are associated with outcomes that are difficult to measure, in part because it is not possible to control all of the variables that may influence the desired outcomes.

These ambitions and challenges are common to many ongoing policy programmes in the UK and the appeal of ToC lies with its apparent capacity to address these challenges within a single evaluative approach.

Central to a ToC evaluation is the requirement that the evaluator 'surface' the implicit theory of action inherent in a proposed intervention in order to delineate what *should* happen if the theory is correct and to identify short, medium and long term indicators of changes which can provide evidence on which to base evaluative judgements. For this process to be sufficiently robust a number of principles must be adhered to. These are elaborated below.

First, the development of the ToC must involve all of the relevant stakeholders, i.e. from policy development to implementation, from providers to intended beneficiaries. Engagement with this potentially diverse group of stakeholders also requires that they reach a consensus about the ToC to be applied. Like broad stakeholder involvement the achievement of consensus is considered key if widespread ownership of subsequent action and evaluation are to be assured. For Weiss there is an important distinction between the need to generate consensus as to the overarching theory and programme or initiative theories that point to different routes to the desired ends. In her view while the achievement of consensus in the former is essential, it is not necessarily desirable in the latter where 'until better evidence accumulates, it would probably be counterproductive to limit inquiry to a single set of assumptions' (1995). In their development of the ToC approach Connell and Kubisch clarify this distinction by suggesting that while multiple strategies are both inevitable and may be even desirable, there must be some limits, namely that if ToC 'are to be implemented (doable) they cannot be contradictory' (1998:31).

To achieve desired change stakeholders must be clear about the outcomes that are sought and the appropriateness of the interventions designed to achieve those outcomes in the prevailing context. Consequently proposed interventions to achieve desired outcomes must be supported by evidence in relation to: the *need* for the interventions, the *pertinence* of the chosen interventions above others and the intended *consequences* of the interventions in

terms of short, medium and long term goals. This helps to elaborate the nature of the data needed to support evaluation and it also helps to demonstrate the linkages between action and outcomes so providing a means of addressing the 'attribution dilemma' associated with evaluating complex initiatives. The potency of the ToC's capacity to limit 'the attribution dilemma' is derived from the Aspen Round Table's insistence on the direct involvement of key stakeholders in the development of the ToC. By drawing stakeholders together and involving them in a dialogue about how and why proposed actions will lead to desired outcomes advocates of ToC argue that these stakeholders will have greater confidence in attributing subsequent changes to the previously specified actions. Involvement in the process of theory generation instils ownership amongst stakeholders that extends beyond action to evaluation. What this should imply for practice is that '[a]lthough this strategy cannot eliminate all alternative explanations for a particular outcome, it aligns the major actors in the initiative with a standard of evidence that will be convincing to *them*'(Connell and Kubisch, 1998:18, italics in original).

The ToC must be able to delineate change at all levels. The participants in the Aspen Round Table (the originators of the ToC approach) identified three levels at which ToCs would operate: the strategic, the workstream or meso level and the project level. Activity at each level informed the others and if the ToC approach was operationalised correctly it should have been possible to trace the features at one level through the other levels. The definition of 'strategic, meso and project' will vary depending upon the context.

The quality of the resulting ToC employed can be assessed against the following criteria:

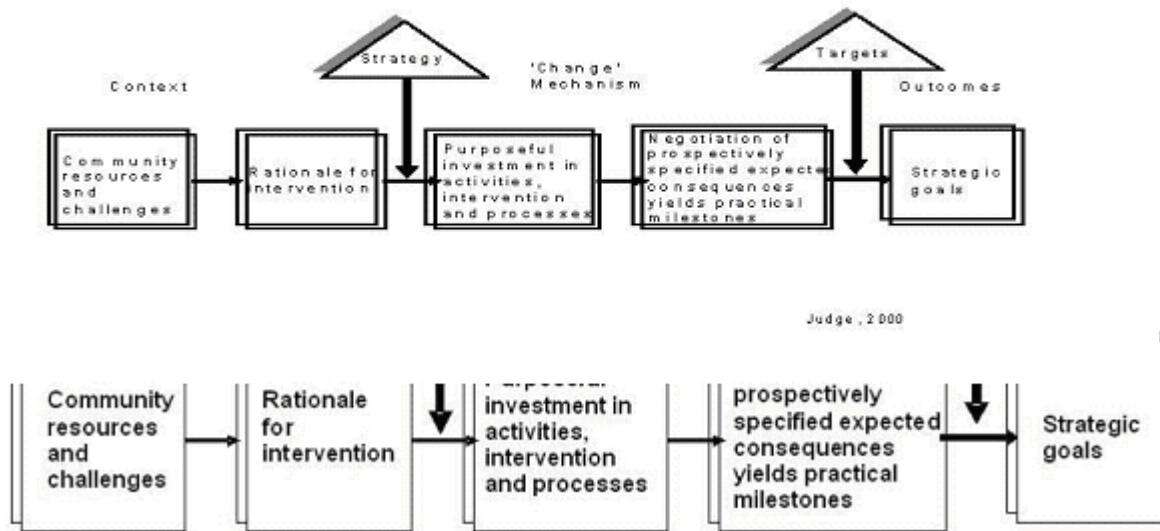
- How *plausible* it is - the extent to which stakeholders are convinced of the logic of the theory
- How *doable* it is - the degree to which necessary resources are available to deliver the necessary interventions
- How *testable* it is - how far it is possible to collect evidence that will demonstrate the validity of the theory
- How *meaningful* it is - the importance attached to the outcomes by stakeholders and their consequent preparedness to make the necessary changes to achieve them (Judge et al 2000).

## 2.2. Implementing a ToC approach

Conventionally a ToC approach begins by examining the needs and resources of a local community, identifying long term goals that will meet these needs, specifying a range of interventions (activities, processes, projects) that will lead to these goals, articulating the rationale for each of these interventions and then prospectively specifying short, medium and long term milestones on the way to goal achievement (Figure 1).

The relationship between the stages of the ToC is a dynamic one as expectations about the achievement of outcomes may change in view of available resources and the ToC itself may be modified over time following initial implementation.

Figure 1 Realistic Evaluation and Theories of Change



At each stage the measurement of change needs to be facilitated by the delineation of: the key *indicators* of change, the target *populations* for change, the *threshold* for change, i.e. how much change is enough and the *timelines* for change.

Supporters of the ToC approach argue that it has a number of benefits. The ToC emphasis on the prospective specification of goals, targets and activities is argued to facilitate measurement and data collection by clearly indicating which elements are important for the evaluation, thereby also enabling the targeting of scarce evaluation resources. The ToC focus on context supports stakeholder learning about what works in what circumstances so producing more useful policy learning and the close involvement of stakeholders in the processes of prospective specification reduces problems of attribution so facilitating greater confidence in the subsequent evaluation findings.

### 2.3. The possibilities and limitations to ToC

ToC has strong linkages with other more well known approaches to evaluation as well as complementing developments in the field that emphasise the conceptual, (e.g. Chen 1990, Chen and Rossi 1983) and practical (e.g. Funnel 1997) contribution of theory driven approaches. There are three important aspects to evaluation practice that ToC can be aligned with:

#### *Process-Outcomes evaluation.*

These approaches have been common in evaluations of public policy, particularly since the significance of implementation was acknowledged (Robson 1993, Owen 1999). Understanding what happens and why in a programme can be vital in helping to examine why particular objectives were or were not achieved (Imrie and Thomas 1995). ToC adds value to this approach by requiring the link between process and outcome to be articulated at the beginning

of the process.

### *Responsive/Interactive evaluation.*

The involvement of particular stakeholders in the process of designing and undertaking evaluation is most obviously exemplified by action research or empowerment evaluation (Fetterman et al 1996). However there are a variety of other ways in which stakeholders' perspectives can be included in evaluation. The purpose of evaluations of this type is to be flexible so as to ensure that factors important to the evaluation are not missed out by a predetermination of evaluation questions, approaches and methods. Increasingly popular in public policy as a way of building learning into the process of policy implementation, responsive evaluation has been used with staff groups as key stakeholders (Everitt and Hardiker 1996, Hart and Bond 1995, Sullivan 2000). It is also increasingly common in UK and US regeneration programmes as a means of ensuring that community perspectives are built into the purpose and process of evaluation (e.g. Nyden et al, Sullivan and Potter 2001). ToC adds value to these approaches by linking the participation of all relevant stakeholders with a maximisation of learning and also by making explicit the different value bases that underpin the perspectives of more or less powerful stakeholders.

### *Realistic evaluation*

Pawson and Tilley's (1997) work in relation to this highlights the importance of context in determining how a policy intervention will be played out in practice. Context may take a number of forms e.g., policy, geography, socio-economic, political and institutional. What ToC adds to this aspect of evaluation is an emphasis upon the dynamic nature of the context, particularly the policy context and the way in which a programme may have to adapt over time as a result of changes in the national policy context, as well as locally generated changes consequent on early activities.

However, reflecting on the various experiences of UK evaluators in utilising ToC in Area Based Initiatives (ABIs) it is possible to identify a range of factors that act to limit the utility of ToC in practice. These were devised in relation to the specific experience of HAZs (Sullivan et al, 2002) but have been developed here in the light of the experience of NDC and LSP. The factors can be summarised as:

### *Practical.*

The authors of the ToC approach specify an intensive relationship between evaluator and subject which involves the evaluator in a key role in working with the subject to identify the variety of potential ToC and also contributes to the process of negotiation which may lead to consensus about the agreed ToC, or which may reveal differences likely to constitute barriers to effective action. Experience from the HAZ evaluation suggests without sufficient resources evaluators will not be able to dedicate sufficient time to developing this kind of intense relationship. This will be compounded where there are a large number of research sites. Second, if the evaluation does not commence until after the initiative it will be difficult to secure the space to engage in the necessary development activity. As a result the range of stakeholders that the evaluators are able to involve in the ToC process will be limited.

### *Professional.*

In addition to the amount of resources available to support the development of ToC is the nature of the resources that are invested. Experience from the US and the UK suggests that evaluators involved in ToC need to be practiced evaluators but also to have skills in relation to group processes, e.g. facilitation, negotiation, conflict resolution. Evaluators are also likely to need sound political skills in order to manage the tension that is likely to be created by the utilisation of ToC, to generate and maintain the necessary commitment to the process by key stakeholders and to manage the evaluator/technical assistance/learning roles. Finally evaluators involved in ToC will need knowledge of the substantive area under examination and in the case of ABIs will also need to be experienced at working with communities.

### *Political.*

This highlights the difficulty of balancing the long term investment needed to build the necessary capacity among stakeholders to participate effectively with the political imperative of the commissioners for 'early wins' which has long been the experience of those involved in ABIs. Similarly, the emphasis that ToC places on consensus and the need for all stakeholders to agree may paradoxically result in fewer stakeholders being engaged in the process of deliberation about rationales for intervention and outcomes. In practice it almost certainly prefers those stakeholders that are involved early on and have an established place at the table and understand the 'rules of the game' to those who are less well organised, less well served by current arrangements and more likely to be disadvantaged as service users and communities.

### *Theoretical.*

ToC demands that for developments to be sustainable they have to emerge from the interaction of the stakeholders with ownership of the process. In ABIs these stakeholders include community members. This presents a challenge to the evaluator for it implies that the theory building process needs to be completed before specific questions can be addressed to the ToC. Underlying this is uncertainty about the extent to which evaluators can make use of or draw on existing evidence and lessons that pertain to the area under investigation.

### *Systemic.*

The emphasis on bottom-up theory building has the potential to limit the explanatory possibilities available from a broader theoretical perspective. Additionally, placing the emphasis on the activities and strategies being pursued and underpinned by the locally defined rationale has the potential to sideline systemic factors that may impinge on the successful pursuit of objectives. This has been recognised by the Aspen Round Table in their review of CCIs where they explicitly advise that an element of the CCIs work is to engage with those outside the intervention to help contextualise activity but also to try and influence some of those stakeholders with interests in the wider systemic forces (Kubisch et al, 2002).

### *Contextual.*

In contexts where the proposed intervention is locally derived and driven it may be possible to secure the commitment of all relevant stakeholders to the ToC. However, in the UK (and with

specific reference here to the English experience of ABIs such as HAZ, NDC and LSP) in a context where the intervention is derived and driven nationally, it will be more difficult to accommodate different perspectives and ownership will be both limited and potentially fragmented. For example, the HAZ evaluation was not able to build into its programme the development of an overarching ToC that was informed by the Department of Health's thinking on HAZs and so accommodating the respective perspectives of the centre and the HAZ sites was difficult.

Although this report was commissioned by the Office, the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

### 3. ToC and LPSAs

In many ways the adoption of a ToC approach to the evaluation of LPSAs fits well with the key features of this policy instrument. The involvement of both central and local stakeholders in the design and agreement of the LPSA is contained within the ToC's focus on multiple stakeholders; the use of the LPSA as a means of improving the attainment of priority outcomes via the specification and delivery of a number of agreed performance targets is at the heart of the ToC approach which requires the prospective specification of targets and milestones for every intervention; and the connections that exist between the achievement of local and national priorities that comprise the main part of the LPSA reflect the ToC's emphasis on the multi-layered nature of change.

However, while the degree of complementarity between LPSAs and ToCs appears high, there are implications for LPSAs of the adoption of the ToC approach. These include: the need to specify exactly who the stakeholders are and how they have been involved or not in the process of developing the LPSA and the implications of this, the importance of understanding the rationales that underpin agreed actions, the significance of 'surfacing' multiple or competing ToCs amongst stakeholders, the requirement to establish the nature and quality of evidence that informs the selection of specific activities, targets and milestones as it is this evidence that will be drawn upon in assessing progress towards the goals outlined in the ToC and the importance of determining the depth of any multi-layering i.e. the links that exist between a ToC for LPSA at a national policy level and ToCs that may pertain at local authority level

#### 3.1. Generating a ToC for LPSA

Following the approach outlined in section 2 above it is possible to identify the following as an outline ToC for LPSAs (*at national policy level*). This is derived from: data from the evaluation of the pilot LPSAs, documentary analysis of LPSA related policy and performance papers and interviews with a sample of key central and local stakeholders, as well as actors in three pilot case studies undertaken as part of the development phase of the full evaluation. It was revised following a workshop event involving a core group of central and local government stakeholders.

##### 3.1.1. Context

This section focuses on the issue or problem context, identifying key needs and resources and any relevant background at the time of the inception of LPSA policy.

Our assessment of the available evidence suggests that context has been significant in determining the direction and impact of the LPSA and that key contextual factors have changed over time. At the inception of the LPSA initiative the evidence suggested contextual

pressures emanating primarily from central government but with some complementary impetus from local authorities. There was a clear sense from respondents that central government needed local government if it was to deliver on key national targets; service improvement locally was a core requirement of central government but best value was perceived to be not delivering fast enough, and in any event the best value targets did not match central government targets for which there was no delivery mechanism. In addition the Treasury was reluctant to put more money into local government without the certainty of improved performance. However, it was also suggested that the prevailing atmosphere of 'us and them', 'tellers and doers' between the centre and localities was not conducive to securing sustainable change in local government and so any new initiative would need to take account of this. The LGA concordat between central and local government and the renewal of the central-local government partnership in 1997 were identified as important elements in creating a new relationship, although some respondents were concerned that Ministers still lacked confidence in local government to deliver.

At the same time ministers were seeking to reform the ways in which central government did business, pursuing a more 'joined up' approach to policy making and regulation within central government departments; the PSA instrument was one instrument developed to achieve this.

Within local government there were also enthusiasts for change; the advent of community planning and the attendant possibility of local government taking a lead on the delivery of local outcomes was attractive to some local authorities, while others were seen to be pressing for much greater room for manoeuvre and more influence in policy making as well as delivery. LPSAs appeared to offer an opportunity to achieve this. For the LGA LPSAs were also perceived as an alternative route to the proposals for plan-based funding for local government suggested by central government as a potential replacement for formula funding.

The initial experiences of the pilot LPSAs demonstrated the significance of local context in influencing local authorities' approach to and experience of implementation of the initiative (OPM, 2001). Local authorities brought very different expectations to the LPSA; some were mainly motivated by the prospect of reward grant, others by the prospect of a new relationship with central government. Local authorities' experience of the LPSA was also affected by the history of relationships they had with other parts of the public policy system. Progress was sometimes easier where local authorities had pre-existing strong relationships with relevant central government departments and where ways had been found to overcome any differences in organisational culture that could hamper effective communication between different parts of the system. Similarly progress could be hampered by the absence or poor quality of local partnership relationships with agencies with an important contribution to make to target achievement. Finally local authorities' approach to LPSAs was influenced by their degree of preparedness to participate, their capacity and their size. For example the negotiation process highlighted any inadequacies in management information, and weaknesses in communication between the corporate centres of authorities and service departments.

Although the policy remained largely unchanged from the pilot to the roll-out phase, as the scheme rolled out there were changes in the understanding both locally and centrally of what the policy might achieve and how, as differently motivated authorities became involved and as expectations changed as a result of early experiences. Recent reflections on the changes in context since 1997 have generated a number of specific factors that are perceived to have positive/negative implications by different stakeholders. These are mainly changes to the

institutional environment within which local government operates and include: the introduction of CPA which in later PSAs helped to set the agenda for change, but could also create tensions as CPA measures the performance of the local authority working alone, and the PSA encourages partnership; the development of LSPs which has strengthened partnership working; the agreement of 'shared priorities' between central government and the LGA demonstrating (to Ministers among others) the degree to which there is a shared agenda; the development of new funding sources for local government meaning that PSAs are just one amongst many possible pots of additional resources; the establishment of the Innovations Forum as an alternative to the process of individually negotiated freedoms and flexibilities; the introduction of the powers of well being to local government bolstering its capacity to act; and the increasing presence of local officials in central government departments via secondments which is perceived to have helped to forge better understandings between the centre and localities. During this time there were also changes in the way the LPSA policy was implemented and the nature of agreements, largely as a result of the learning process on both sides. Some of these changes arose from the 'roll out' of LPSAs which resulted in some central government departments being 'overloaded' with requests and local authorities sharing intelligence with each other so informing future approaches. A major consequence of learning appears to be that the radicalism of early LPSAs has diminished. The issue of freedoms and flexibilities is important here. They have not been as extensive as was hoped, in part because of limited local authority ambition but also because of central government's limited readiness to offer change. This in turn has led to local authorities' having reduced expectations about achieving freedoms and flexibilities and so offering relatively little commitment to innovation through the LPSA.

'Roll out' also affected the nature of the LPSA constituency, moving from a self-selected group of pilots to a virtually universal policy with the consequence that participating authorities varied widely in their enthusiasm for and capacity to engage with the policy. This coincided with a more proactive approach by central government to LPSAs manifest in the requirement for localities to select targets from four priority areas (education, crime, social care/health, transport). While central government was perceived by stakeholder to have developed better intelligence about the LPSA process and in particular clarifying issues of 'stretch', there was also a suggestion by some that over time the focus on 'value for money' had become more pronounced (i.e., do the improvements in outcomes justify the costs of the process?).

The relative importance of all these contextual factors and their impact will be explored during the course of the research.

### **3.1.2. Long term goals**

Several long term goals/outcomes associated with LPSAs emerged from the documentary, pilot, stakeholder interview and workshop data. These were:

- A sustainable improvement in local service delivery
- The achievement of central government priority outcomes
- The achievement of local priorities
- Enhanced partnership working between local authorities and other local organisations
- More efficient and effective harnessing of all local capacity to achieve priorities

- More mature working relationships between central and local government
- Contribution to the 'change agenda' within central government

There was consensus amongst respondents that the achievement of sustained improvements in local service delivery to meet priority outcomes was the fundamental goal; the other goals were subsidiary or instrumental to the achievement of improved local outcomes. The nature of the relationship between short term improvements in performance against targets and sustained improvements in outcomes was unclear and indeed the former may mitigate against the latter. Some objectives only emerged as the policy developed (notably change within central government and enhanced local partnership working). Others were implicit (notably the development of capacity within local government). There was general agreement that sustained improvement required systemic changes at both local and central government level, but doubt over the achievability of sufficiently profound and widespread change at central government level.

### **3.1.3. Intervention**

This section describes the activity/instrument that will stimulate the necessary changes to achieve the agreed outcomes. The intervention is the Local Public Service Agreement in which the authority commits itself to achieving a dozen or so specific targets that will require performance beyond what could have been expected in the absence of a Local PSA; and

- The Government offers to reward the authority's success.
- The Government also offers to help the authority achieve success by offering at the outset:
  - o a "pump-priming" grant;
  - o scope for some extra borrowing, on the strength of "unsupported credit approvals"; and
  - o possible relaxations in statutory and administrative requirements, ('freedoms and flexibilities') where the authority believes this could help substantially in achieving its targets.
- Negotiation between central and local government is about ends but not means
- Business managers are appointed in ODPM to help facilitate the negotiation process between local authorities and central government departments

### **3.1.4. Rationale**

This section considers the underlying assumptions that informed the design and development of the LPSA and its operation. The assumptions pertained to the ways in which respondents conceived that the operation of the LPSA would facilitate the necessary changes to achieve the pre determined long term goals. Drawing on the available data the researchers derived the following sets of assumptions that may underpin the approach of central and local government to the LPSA:

In relation to central government the following assumptions were identified:

- The application of a bespoke instrument combining enablers, incentives and rewards will stimulate real change and better achievement of government targets
- An incentive to improvement may succeed where exhortation has failed
- Permitting flexibility over how targets are achieved will result in innovation and more locally sustainable actions, and better value for money
- Engaging in a negotiated settlement with local authorities will spread ownership of the initiative into localities
- Specific agreements tailored to individual local issues and circumstances can create locally relevant targets which stretch performance beyond what might otherwise have been achieved
- The process of negotiation producing a 'something for something' agreement can have successful effects in enhancing performance
- Central government is able to help improvement by reducing 'red tape', but that 'red tape' may not be as pervasive a hindrance as it is sometimes suggested and the negotiations will clarify this
- Targeted interventions like LPSA will impact beyond those immediately involved, to increase the capacity of the whole local governance system to achieve priority outcomes in conjunction with other elements of the LGMA.

In relation to local government it was possible to identify the following assumptions:

- Additional resources (as enablers, incentives or rewards) will better enable targets to be achieved
- The introduction of negotiated agreements will lead to new relationships where local authorities have greater influence on the policy agenda
- It is better to agree targets than to have them imposed
- The introduction of freedoms and flexibilities will pave the way for greater local discretion
- The LPSA will stimulate a focus on performance within the local authority or will reinforce actions the local authority has already taken to embed a more performance oriented culture into the authority
- The LPSA in combination with other policy instruments e.g. Best Value, LSPs, well being, will impact beyond those immediately involved, to increase the capacity of the whole local governance system to achieve priority outcomes in conjunction with other elements of the LGMA
- A clear focus on a limited number of objectives will better enable achievement and possibility of cultural transformation

The assumptions underpinning the rationale for LPSA were subsequently developed into a set of change mechanisms linking the policy instrument (the LPSA) to the specified outcomes. These are described and discussed in section 3.1.6.

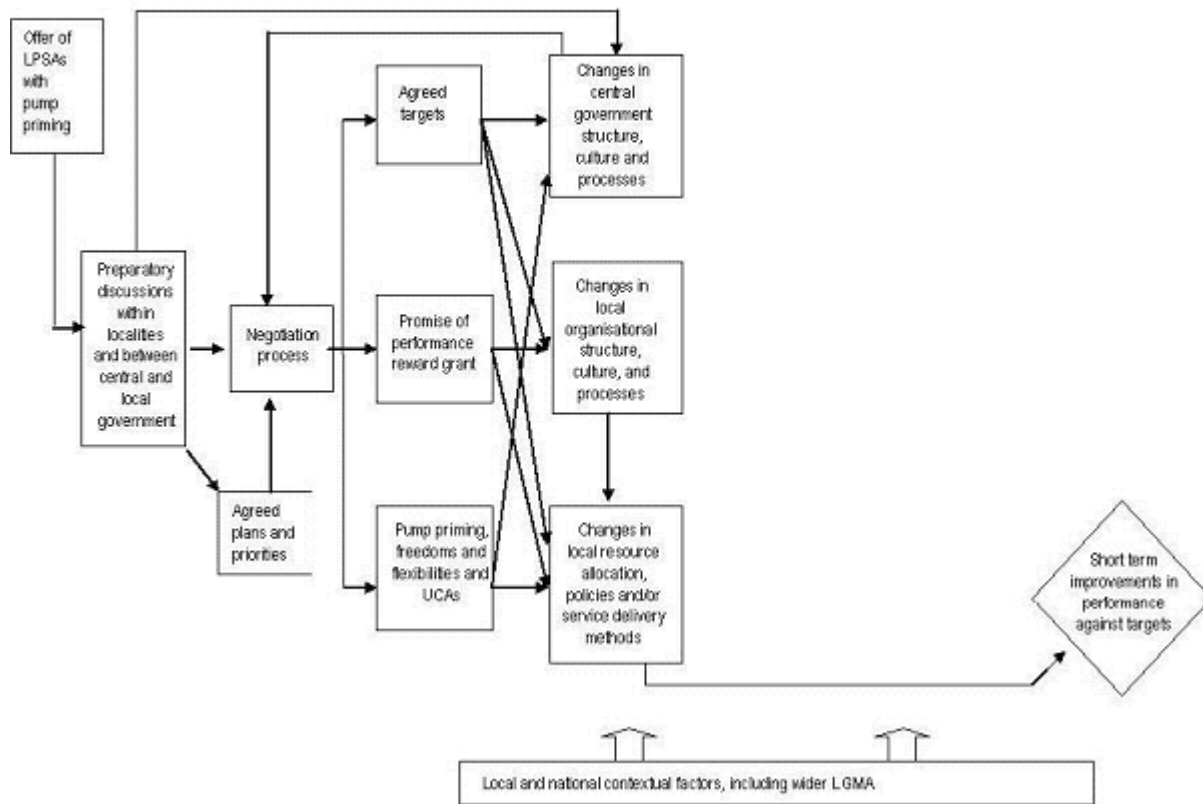
### **3.1.5. Milestones**

This is where the interaction between the LPSA and its context produces changes leading to

the fulfilment of the long term outcomes. In the delineation of the ToC it is necessary to specify the stages by which this change will occur and the way in which short and medium term changes arise from the application of the intervention (the LPSA) and lead to the long term outcomes.

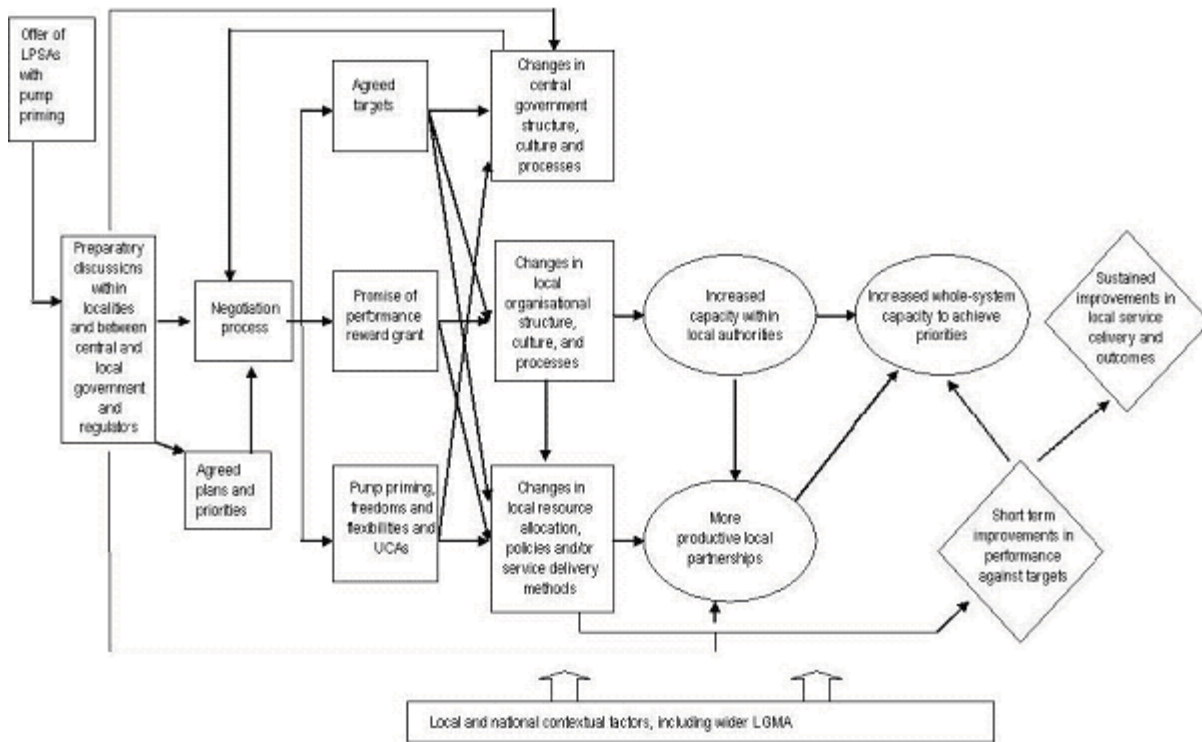
A number of propositions for change were outlined in the LPSA feasibility study. These have been elaborated following recent pilot studies and stakeholder interviews and have generated a ToC with three distinct but related aspects, a minimum, medium and maximum theory. These are illustrated below (figures 2, 3 and 4).

Figure 2. A minimum model of LPSAs



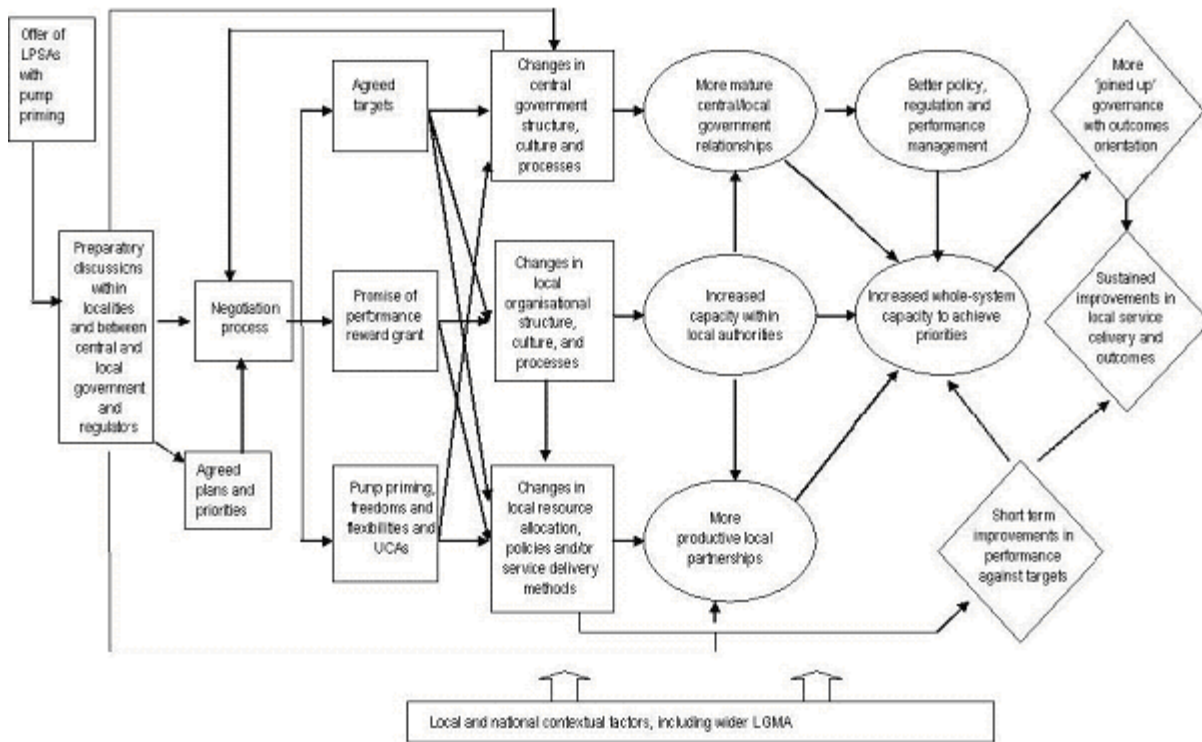
In the minimum model of the ToC, the focus is on short term change within specific local service areas to achieve specified targets. There is little expectation that change will be long lasting or widespread.

Figure 3. A medium model of LPSAs



The medium model of the ToC (figure 3) envisages LPSAs as stimulating much broader and deeper structural and cultural change in localities involving local authorities and their partners and leading to longer term sustainable service improvements.

Figure 4. A maximum model of LPSAs



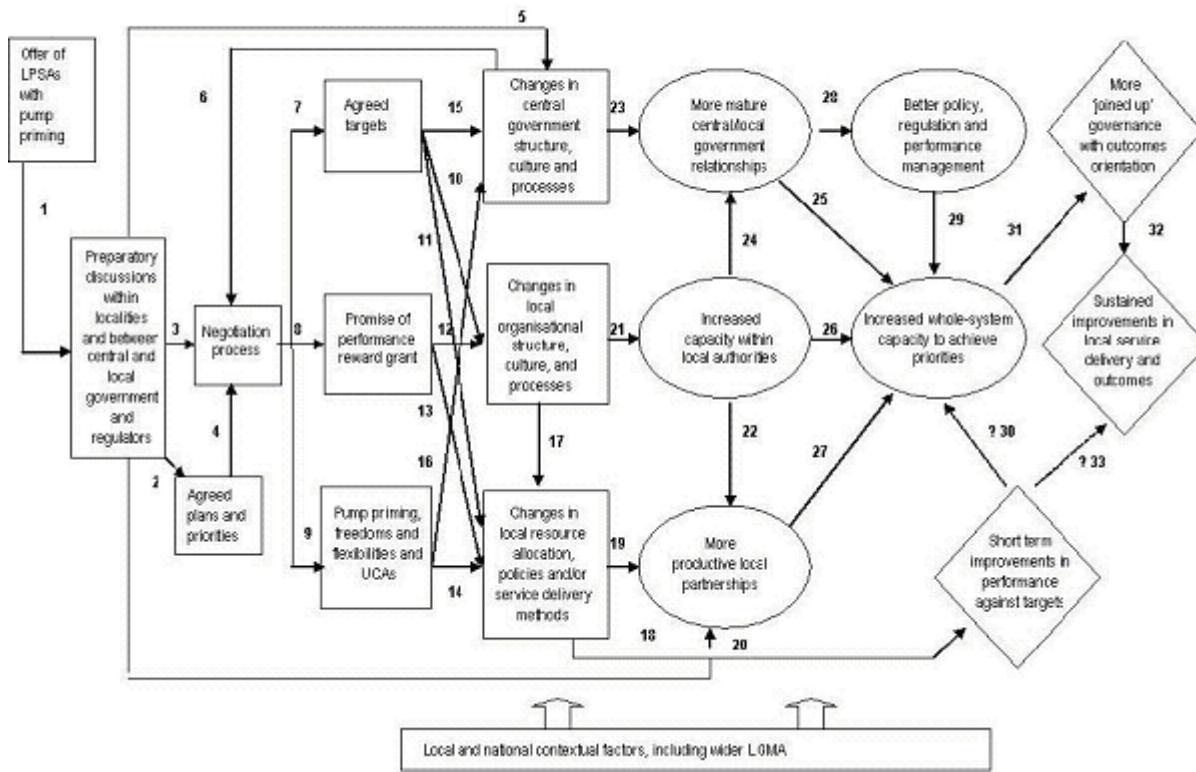
The maximum model of the ToC (Figure 4) delineates change at both local and national levels leading to better policy and regulation and contributing to the achievement of 'joined-up' government.

### 3.1.6. Change mechanisms

Drawing on the material generated by the evaluation work on LPSAs to date it is possible to identify a number of short and medium term features which either mark stages along the ToC route or could help explain progress between different stages of the ToC. These are highlighted below (Figure 5) using the maximum model and specified in Table 1.

As the model indicates (mechanisms 1-6), a considerable amount of activity (within and without the local authority) precedes the negotiation and agreement of the LPSA, all of which is influential in informing both the nature of the resulting agreement and also central and local government's understanding and expectations of each other; this latter development stimulating change within central government and subsequently between partners at local level (mechanism 20). The negotiation phase (mechanisms 7-9) is the point at which the various requirements and incentives associated with the LPSA combine to promote local government's ambition and stimulate central government to facilitate change.

Figure 5. Change mechanisms in the maximum model of LPSAs



Once having agreed the LPSA the model illustrates the ways in which three key features of the LPSA (the targets, performance reward grant and the pump priming monies, freedoms and flexibilities and unsupported credit approvals) act to bring about change in central government structures, cultures and processes, local organisational structures, cultures and processes and to local resource allocation, policy and approaches to service delivery (mechanisms 10-17). The focus for change is the development of better planning for and delivery of key outcomes along with the establishment of new and/or better ways to monitor and manage performance towards the achievement of these outcomes. The model envisages the three key features interacting to generate the desired changes and also the way in which changes to local organisational structures, cultures and processes resulting from these interactions will themselves contribute to changes in local resourcing, policy and service delivery (mechanism 17). While most activity takes place at the local level important changes are also identified within central government (mechanisms 15 and 16).

The resulting changes to the way resources are allocated and/or services delivered improves short-term performance towards LPSA targets (mechanism 18). It also supports improved productivity amongst local partnerships (mechanism 20). Improved productivity is also fostered by the changes to local cultures, structures and processes which helps to generate the increased local government capacity necessary for such improvement (mechanisms 21 and 22). The changes to central government structures, cultures and processes and the increased local government capacity both act to facilitate more mature central-local relations between the tiers of government (mechanisms 23 and 24).

The changed behaviour engendered by new relationships and the increased productivity arising from local authority and partnership actions combines to support the emergence of

increased whole-system capacity to meet priorities (mechanisms 25-27). At the same time parallel developments are underway in relation to the way in which policy is made, managed and monitored; the new relationship between central and local government, based on increased trust and generating swifter, more robust flows of intelligence between the tiers, facilitates this (mechanisms 25, 28 and 29).

Finally the model (tentatively) suggests that the short-term improvements in services could have longer term impacts on whole-system capacity and sustainable service change in part because of the actions taken to meet the LPSA targets and the learning that has been generated amongst local authorities as part of the LPSA process and in part because of public pressure to maintain service improvements over time (mechanisms 30 and 33). The model also predicts that the changes in central-local relations (manifest in increased whole-system capacity) will themselves be strengthened and deepened over time, breaking down 'silo' approaches to governance and supporting the establishment of a more 'joined-up' approach to governance which will be able to effect sustainable change in local outcomes (mechanisms 31 and 32).

In the evaluation of LPSAs the presence and relative significance of these various change mechanisms will be examined in different contexts and over time.

Table 1. Change mechanisms at each stage of the ToC

Key to diagram	
1	Offer of LPSA stimulates local action
1	'Pump priming' funds spurs local partners to greater ambition and innovation in relation to potential service improvements
2	Initial deliberation with partners and regulators facilitates agreement of key local priorities
3	Greater understanding on both sides of the other's position enables agreement to be reached
4	Agreed local plans and priorities better equips local government for productive negotiations
5	Central government gains a better understanding of the impact of policy and regulation on the ground, of blockages in communication that exist between central departments and with local authorities and which cause unnecessary constraints on local action, and of what works where and why
5	Central government develops partnership working skills
5	Central government develops a better understanding of problems and priorities in specific localities

6	Changes in attitudes and understanding within government facilitate negotiation
7	Local authorities and their partners, through the process of developing their proposals, develop a better understanding of local priorities and what is achievable locally
7	Local authorities are encouraged to be more ambitious
7	Central government gains an understanding of what is realistic
8	The prospect of a reward grant motivates local authorities and their partners to promise greater stretch on targets
9	The promise of pump priming and UCAs overcomes local authority concerns about the cost of change and their ability to fund it
9	Discussions about freedoms and flexibilities enable local and central government to understand the real nature of the barriers and to jointly come up with solutions
10	LPSA targets are aligned with and integrated into CPA and other local processes and plans
10	The commitment to achieving targets leads the local authority to put in place new structures, systems and processes deliver on targets and manage performance
10	The commitment to achieving targets initiates or strengthens a performance culture, providing an impetus for performance measurement and target setting
10	The commitment to achieving targets strengthens the focus on outcomes
11	Agreed targets and the actions required to achieve them are woven into local plans and budgets
11	Local authorities focus their attention on achieving stretch performance in a limited number of areas, so concentrating organisational capacity more effectively
11	The LPSA provides political legitimacy for the provision of targeting of resources on priority groups or neighbourhoods
12	The prospect of a reward grant provides an incentive for organisational changes which might otherwise be considered too difficult or costly or a low priority
12	The prospect of a reward grant is used to reinforce a performance culture
13	The prospect of a reward grant provides an incentive for changes in service delivery which might otherwise be considered too difficult or costly or a low priority
13	The prospect of a reward grant provides an incentive for risk-taking and innovation
14	Pump priming funds additional or new services in target areas by providing

	a short term increase in funding to agencies with very limited discretionary resources
14	Pump priming reduces the risk of innovation by providing 'free' money for some or all of the initial costs without calling on core funding
14	Pump priming enables sustainable reconfiguration of resources, by leveraging in resources from other areas
14	Unsupported Credit Approvals allow investment to achieve targets
14	Freedoms and flexibilities remove blockages to the achievement of targets, by enabling local authorities to do things they could not otherwise do
14	Freedoms and flexibilities allow local authorities to allocate resources more effectively
15	Central government departments are committed by the agreements to developing new processes of dialogue with local authorities
16	Central government gains understanding of how policy and regulation can create obstacles that constrain local ability to achieve outcomes and this stimulates action to clarify real as opposed to imagined blockages and to develop a more streamlined approach to responding to local government
17	Structural and cultural changes facilitate new ways of working
18	Changes in service delivery lead to short term improvements in performance in target areas through a wide variety of service-specific mechanisms
19	The LPSA provides an opportunity for and structure within which partners can work together on local priorities
19	Shared reward grant (or shared decision making about the allocation of reward grant) is used to strengthen commitment by partners and encourage a focus on outcomes
19	Pump priming is used as a lever to encourage resource pooling and draw resources out of partners
19	Freedoms and flexibilities remove barriers to partnership working
19	The experience of working together to achieve shared priorities leads to trust and understanding that strengthens partnership working more generally in the locality
20	Partners are engaged in setting priorities and negotiating targets leading to the development of a shared agenda and shared commitment to achieve targets; this becomes reflected in local plans
21	The structures, culture, systems and processes put in place to implement the LPSA become embedded throughout the local authority, influencing and strengthening other processes such as community planning and performance management more generally
21	The PSA becomes the 'glue' that holds together other initiatives in the policy areas covered by the targets, creating a multiplier effect of innovation

	and improvement in related areas
22	Local authorities become better partners (more open, less defensive, more willing to cede power, more willing to change policies and commit resources to shared priorities)
23	A critical mass of Ministers and officials in central government realises the value of closer dialogue with local authorities in order to achieve their own objectives and this becomes embedded in the policy process
24	Local authorities gain a better understanding of the policy process and become more confident in their dialogue with government and are more prepared to be honest about the real problems that they face
25	Central government refrains from imposing policy changes that prevent partners from achieving agreed priorities
26	Local authorities become more strategic, more efficient and more effective
26	Improvement in the performance in the top quartile authorities has knock-on effects on the performance of lower performing authorities, through Best Value
27	Partnerships develop greater focus and the capacity to determine priorities, allocate resources and manage joint delivery more effectively
28	Both central and local government are more trusting of each other which means that they are more honest about difficulties and more prepared to pose potential solutions
28	There is a faster and better feedback loop from implementation to policy formulation
28	Policy becomes more delivery focussed
28	Policy, regulation and performance management becomes more attuned to varied local circumstances and capacities
28	The interaction on the ground between silo- based polices is better understood by central government and policy conflicts are avoided or reduced
29	Policies, regulation and performance management are more effective in informing local responses
30	Local authorities learn from their experience; successful service changes become embedded into mainstream practice
30	In order to achieve short term improvements in some target areas systemic structural change was necessary; this is irreversible
31	Simultaneous change in central and local government and partnerships breaks down silo thinking and leads to a virtuous circle of more effective

	policy development and implementation and better use of resources
32	'Joined up' governance is better able to identify, agree and deliver on key outcomes
33	Local expectations of service levels are raised, so a drop in performance to previous levels is politically unacceptable

### 3.1.7. Factors supporting or inhibiting change

The ToC outlines what *should* happen if the theory is correct. However, in a complex and dynamic environment there are a number of factors which may interfere with the operation of the ToC, supporting and/or inhibiting change and sometimes requiring the ToC to be revised as a result of experience. An important task for evaluators is to try and establish when problems arise because of 'theory failure' as opposed to the intervention of other factors such as changes in context. Evaluation data generated so far suggests that there are important factors in the environment which may impact upon the implementation of the LPSA to either facilitate or inhibit it. These include:

Factors to support change:

- Leadership and high profile of LPSA among local authority senior management (and political leadership) and a central role in corporate planning and performance
- Local authorities with a 'can do' culture
- Local authorities with existing performance orientation and infrastructure
- Where credible local infrastructure is already in place e.g. crime reduction partnerships
- Local authority negotiators with the authority to make decisions
- Clear lines of accountability and reporting at the local level to maintain information flow and keep key stakeholders interested
- Adequately resourced LPSA team in ODPM
- Central government infrastructure and culture to support performance management in some service areas e.g. Department of Health and SSI, DfES and OFSTED
- Shared goals and a culture of trust between partners.

Factors that inhibit change:

- Some central government departments perceive LPSA as an unnecessary diversion from their policy goals/performance instruments
- Domination of central government targets over local area priorities producing perverse incentives
- Focus by central government on achievement at the end point rather than improvement over time may act against sustainable change
- Unwillingness of ODPM to re-open negotiations over the life of an agreement
- Dominance of the civil service priority to deliver to the Minister on policy may limit opportunities for new local approaches to be developed. Lack of change at the centre leads to lack of creativity and LPSA becomes mechanical

- Distracters e.g. new policy initiatives which change priorities, change the way in which targets are measured, or render the initial target inappropriate, or more fundamental shifts such as CPA which marginalize PSAs
- Adverse changes in local context, e.g. factory closure, regime change
- Local partners not committed to the ambition of the LPSA
- Limited intelligence about target setting and measurement, particularly in relation to cross-cutting issues and at local level
- Poor data leading to inaccurate baselines and 'without PSA' estimates, and hence to targets that are too stretching or not stretching enough
- Where service officials are at odds with corporate officials in the local authority about priorities and targets
- Profile of and significance attached to the LPSA as a change agent very different even between departments in same authority.
- If LPSA renders mainstream strategies impotent e.g. EDP and 'aspirational' targets
- Do central government and local authorities have enough people with the right skills and capacities to do this work?
- Exogenous factors and chance, so that despite best efforts the target is not achieved
- Badly formulated targets producing perverse incentives
- Changes in leadership and personnel.

The existence, significance and impact of these various factors to promote or inhibit change through the LPSA will be explored over the life of the evaluation.

### **3.1.8. Using the TOC in the research**

The ToC described above provides a framework for generating hypotheses and questions for the qualitative and quantitative research to be undertaken in the main phase of the evaluation. In this way the ToC will be tested in the course of the research. In terms of progressing the evaluation, the main phase began in October 2003 and will run to 2007. The emphasis in the data gathering and analysis is qualitative as befits the complexity of the issues involved, although it is complemented by quantitative analysis across the relevant local authority population as a whole. During the main phase of the evaluation the researchers will carry out: 20 longitudinal case studies of local authorities, qualitative research in central government departments, and a regular series of interviews with individuals who are centrally involved in the process, collection and multivariate analysis of explanatory and outcome data in all top-tier authorities, and a broad range of dissemination activity including workshops on issues which require clarification, with invitees drawn from case study and other local authorities and central government departments. These dissemination activities combined with regular reports to government will provide opportunities to review findings against the ToC in order to assess the emerging similarities and differences between theory and practice and make judgements about any implications for the evaluation.

Although this report was commissioned by the Office, the findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## References

Aspen Institute (1995) *Voices from the Field: Learning from the Early Work of Comprehensive Community Initiatives*, Washington, Aspen Institute

Chen, H T (1990) *Theory Driven Evaluations*, London, Sage

Chen, H T and Rossi, P H (1983) 'Evaluating with Sense: The Theory - Driven Approach', *Evaluation Review*, 7 pp 283-302

Connell, J P and Kubisch, A C (1998) 'Applying a Theory of Change approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives: progress, prospects and problems, in Fulbright-Anderson, K et al eds., *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Volume 2 Theory, Measurement and Analysis*, Washington DC, The Aspen Institute, pp15-44

Everitt, A and Hardiker, P (1996) *Evaluating for Good Practice*, London, Macmillan

Fetterman, D M Kaftarian, S J and Wandersman, A (1996) *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment and Accountability*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage

Funnel, S (1997) 'Program Logic: an adaptable tool for designing and evaluating programs', *Evaluation News and Comment*, July, pp5-17

Hart, E and Bond, M (1995) *Action Research for Health and Social Care*, Buckingham, Open University Press

Imrie, R and Thomas, H (1995) "Changes in Local Governance and their implications for Urban Policy Evaluation" in Hambleton, R and Thomas, H ed. *Urban Policy Evaluation*, London, Paul Chapman pp 123-138

Judge, K (2000). Testing evaluation to the limits: the case of English Health Action Zones, *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy*, 5, 3-6.

Kooiman, J (1993) 'Governance and Governability: using complexity, dynamics and diversity' in Kooiman, J ed. *Modern Governance*, London, Sage, pp 35

Kubisch, A C Auspos, P Brown, P Chaskin, R Fulbright-Anderson, K and R Hamilton (2002) *Voices From the Field II Reflections on Comprehensive Community Change*, Washington Dc, The Aspen Institute

Nyden P et al (1997) *Building Community: social science in action*, Thousand Oaks, California, Pine Forge Press

OPM, (2001) *Process Evaluation of the Negotiation of Pilot LPSAs*, Final Report, OPM,

London

Owen, J M with Rogers, P J (1999) Program Evaluation, Forms and Approaches, International edition, Australia, Sage

Pawson, R and Tilley, N (1997) Realistic Evaluation, London, Sage

Pierre, J and Peters, G. (2000) Governance, Politics and the State, Macmillan, London

Richards, S. Barnes, M. Coulson, A. Gaster, L. Leach, B. and Sullivan, H (1999) Cross-cutting Issues in Public Policy and Public Service, London, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

Robson, C (1993) Real World Research, Oxford, Blackwell

Skelcher, C (2000) 'Changing images of the state: overloaded, hollowed out, congested' Public Policy and Administration, vol. 15, no. 3, Autumn

Sullivan, H (2000) Community Governance - An evaluation of area approaches in Birmingham, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham

Sullivan, H and Stewart, M (2003) 'Who Owns the Theory of Change?' Paper to the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual MOPAN Conference, 25-27 June, Glasgow

Sullivan, H. Barnes, M and E Matka (2002) 'Building collaborative capacity through 'Theories of Change': Early lessons from Health Action Zones in England', Evaluation, The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, Vol. 8, no 2, pp207-226

Sullivan, H and Potter, T (2001) 'Doing 'joined-up' evaluation in community based regeneration' Local Governance, Vol. 27, no 1, Spring, pp19-31

Weiss, C (1995) 'Nothing as Practical as Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families', in J.P. Connell, A.C. Kubisch, L.B. Schorr and C.H. Weiss (1995) New Approaches to Community Initiatives: Volume 1 - Contexts, Methods and Contexts, Aspen Institute, Washington DC

