

One woman's view of the issues highlighted by the National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: Formative Evaluation and Action Research Programme 2002 - 2005

1. Leadership is the crucial element in determining the capacity of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) - now more important with roll out of Local Area Agreements
2. Rationalisation of other partnerships – hasn't really happened – still lots of other partnerships operating.
3. Accountability – needs strengthening, accountability of partners and to the wider public. How do the LSPs make partners account for their actions?
4. Performance Management – not well established (in non Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) LSPs)
5. LSPs are non-statutory so how can they 'Performance Manage' their partners
6. Lack the capacity to take hard decisions (e.g. between development and conservation)
7. Engaging partners – particularly private business and local councillors. Could resource VCS to become engaged.
8. Stronger ties needed with regional and sub-regional economic strategies
9. Local Authority 'Well Being Power' is not being taken up as a driver.
10. Non NRF LSPs have less capacity to engage effectively for delivery.
11. What actions are best undertaken by LSP, by sub partnerships and by partners?
12. LSP work falls into three categories Process outcomes (working more closely with partners), Governance outcomes (shared vision and wide range of people engaged with decision making) Service outcomes (services delivered better to meet community needs)
13. Progress claimed mainly on Governance outcomes – others little progress made.
14. Most activity still around Process issues
15. County LSPs lag further behind District LSPs on progress.
16. Issues not being addressed by LSPs - innovation and competitiveness, gay and lesbian and gender issues, refugee and asylum issues
17. Questions around whether LSPs are adding value or just badging outcomes achieved by partners?
18. Mainstreaming is largely un-discussed, ambiguous and challenging to LSPs. Many do not see this as a priority.

19. Many LSPs lack structures and capacity for rapid decision making which Local Area Agreement (LAA) process will require
20. LAAs may highlight weaknesses in communication channels and tensions between effective decision making and wide participation.
21. Is the membership of LSPs fit for purpose in terms of skills, knowledge and commitment as LSPs move from forming (process) to delivery of Community Strategies and LAAs? It's important that staff competencies reflect this.
22. Priority to connect LSPs accountability processes with representative democratic processes (non-executive councillors) and cross party working (not just the leading group who nominate their own party councillors to sit on LSPs)
23. Need to engage more with MPs and non-elected bodies (chambers of commerce etc)
24. LSPs need better understanding of the breadth, diversity, structures and capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).
25. Need to build positive relationships with Regional and sub-regional bodies (Regional Development Agencies and economic partnerships)
26. Partners need to consider how to offer greater support and resources to LSPs (e.g. staff resources with the appropriate skills and expertise)
27. Some partners need to change their attitude towards LSPs and accept their legitimacy in holding them to account.
28. LSPs are central to strong local leadership, devolved decision making and driver of community involvement.
29. Delivery of Community Strategies needs new/changed leadership style (in particular officers and councillors)
30. No automatic connection between leadership and followership (when the LSP says jump – it's not clear who jumps!)
31. Strong leadership is necessary to make the links between the outcomes agreed by partners, the strategies to achieve those outcomes and the systems needed to deliver through partner organisations.
32. Leadership is then necessary to 'turn on the current' so that energy and resources flow to make things happen.
33. LSP ability to achieve depends on the balance of power between partners and foremost on the willingness of the Local Authority to lead in an inclusive manner.
34. What is the structure of the LSP? Is it helping to deliver in a co-ordinated way or do sub-groups/partners operate their own fiefdom/arm's length?

35. Seniority of staff and salary levels – sometimes do not assist officers to negotiate with senior personnel in partner organisations.
36. Skill shortages in bid-writing/planning, data collection, analysis and use of evidence, evaluation and monitoring, performance management.
37. Staff - little time for reflection, away days and personal development or learning. Isolated and lack senior managerial support.
38. The consensual style which has been needed to make partnership work mitigates against making tough decisions – will a different style be needed (abrasive/challenging). Will the existing staff be suited to this changing style?
39. LSP want more support (see uses of support table page 46)
40. Voluntary nature of LSP means it has to govern by consent not by command.
41. So many partners makes it difficult to agree and prioritise actions
42. The context within which LSPs are required to Manage Performance will be changed by LAAs
43. Business partners are ranked the lowest in the skills and resources they bring to the LSP.
44. VCS feel overwhelmed by number of council and other public bodies – it perceives the LSPs as being dominated by Local Authorities.
45. There is a tension between LSP needing good relationship with Local Authorities and a requirement for a change in councils' culture and receptiveness.
46. VCS still feel like junior partners and not exercising real influence.
47. VCS are not equipped to address high level strategic issues (nor is it where their interest lies)
48. LSP needs to develop mechanisms for relating to the whole population – using skilled staff.
49. Businesses sceptical about the basis for their involvement and unsure of their role
50. Failure of LSPs to recognise or articulate the concept of city regions.
51. There is little action on - transport, rural issues and sustainability.
52. LSPs have not so far greatly changed the economic development activities of partners. They lack the resources and capacity necessary to fully engage in economic development activities.

53. Mainstream service providers and local VCS groups that tend to dominate LSP boards are detached from economic development agents and agendas.
54. The implications of economic development for citizens, communities and services are not discussed a great deal.
55. Economic development has important implications for issues such as crime and health but this is not presently recognised.