



JUDGE US BY OUR RESULTS...



The Government has just published its new Framework document on the Comprehensive Area Assessment. So does it live up to its ambitions of being a 'catalyst for better partnership working at the local level'?

With the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) due to replace the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) on 1st April, LSPs need now more than ever to think about how they evidence effective partnership working.

The new CAA framework anticipates that a greater proportion of the overall inspection activity than before will focus on cross-cutting issues. Although the Inspectorates will not routinely inspect partnerships themselves, they will 'look at evidence of the capacity and capability of partners to identify where weaknesses in partnership working represent a barrier to improved outcomes, or where innovative or excellent working is delivering results.'

The report from the second round of CAA trials, published by the LGA and IDeA in November 2008, highlights that the general experience was of limited understanding or engagement in CAA by partners and the experience of most trial areas was of a more 'council centric' than 'partner centric' process. The trials also highlighted limited engagement of elected members in the process.

Looking ahead, the report recognises that successful implementation of CAA will require new relationships, skills, cultures and patterns of working, including between local authorities and partners, and that 'Inspectorates need to do more to raise the level of knowledge of CAA with LSP partners'.

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Cllr Mark Worrall
OBE chairs
Tonbridge & Malling LSP

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THE DIFFERENCE IS PTP ...

We are delighted to announce that a new contract for the PtP programme has been awarded. The current PtP contract is coming to a close at the end of March and the future programme went out to tender in the autumn. Improvement and Efficiency South East, via Medway Council as the PtP accountable body, awarded the contract to South East Employers and Shared Intelligence.

Ongoing support for South East LSPs What we offer

Work to build the capacity of LSPs in the region is set to continue for at least two more years. PtP will build on its achievements and re-double efforts to provide LSPs with support that meets both their individual and collective needs.

The development needs of LSPs are specific to local circumstances and the maturity of the partnership. As well as providing a core service which promotes effective practice and supports strong peer networks, PtP aims to provide responsive and flexible resources that offer targeted support where it is most needed and will have the most impact.

The new programme will build on existing PtP services, with some exciting new elements.

The new PtP programme will offer an extensive menu of capacity-building activities and resources, building on existing resources and offering new options. The new programme will include:

- A core 'regional knowledge gateway' of support and information-exchange;
- A dedicated Area Lead for each LSP, who will ensure support from the PtP programme is maximised;
- Information-sharing through newsletters, newswires, the PtP website and DVD; case studies and 'how to' guides aimed at Councillors, LSP board members, and practitioners;
- A core programme of learning and knowledge sharing events including an annual conference, Visioning Roundtables, Learning Modules and

Toolkits, and sub-regional workshops which address current 'hot issues';

- Recruitment and on-going support for our pool of Practitioner Associates - these are PtP-trained experienced practitioners who carry out assignments with LSPs as part of a capacity-building programme;
- A third round of the PtP Central Fund grant worth £444,000 to the region
- Targeted support for innovative ideas and for those LSPs with fewer partnership resources.
- A record and celebration of unfolding successful partnership working disseminated via our website and publications.

PtP HIGHLIGHTS
 Five case studies on partnership activities
 Two regional conferences with 80+ delegates attending each
 Regular regional and sub regional events, the most recent discussing the Communities in Control White Paper
 Visioning Roundtable for senior partners on migrant workers

THE PTP CENTRAL FUND: HELPING LSPS DELIVER

LSPs are expected by government to take the lead in their area. This year they will be even more in the spotlight with the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) system requiring more effective partnership-working. LSPs are expected to ensure that plans agreed in the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the Local Area Agreement (LAA) are implemented, and have a key role in monitoring progress.

PtP Central Fund applications this year indicate that LSPs are focussing closely on these tasks. A quarter of the 63 applicants have planned work explicitly to facilitate the delivery of LAA targets; a further 30 per cent aim to take forward objectives within their area's Sustainable Community Strategy.

The PtP Central Fund offers direct financial support to LSPs in the region. 67 of 74 local authority areas in the region benefited from the PtP Central Fund in year one and bids have been received from 63 of 70 LSPs in the region for the second year of funding
 Bids allowing us to commit the whole fund for this year have been received

LSP	WORK BEING FUNDED BY THE PTP CENTRAL FUND TO DRIVE FORWARD LAA DELIVERY
BRACKNELL FOREST	Launch of a new Community TV service to publicise and support LAA targets, e.g. the reduction of fear of crime (NI041, NI021), stopping smoking (NI123), physical activity (NI8 – adults, and NI57 – children and young people).
READING 2020	An external review to ensure that delivery structures linking the LSP and targets within the LAA are fit for purpose.
SLOUGH FOCUS	A new LSP website to make available: LSP agendas and minutes and Board and Delivery Group documents, including quarterly updates on performance against the LAA.
MILTON KEYNES	Developing partnership risk management approaches in relation to delivery of the SCS and LAA targets.
HASTINGS	Conferences on climate change to raise awareness of adaptation necessary (NI186), and on the economic downturn; and a workshop on equalities.
BASINGSTOKE & DEANE	Facilitated workshops to align current action plans (and support development of new action plans) with both LAA priorities and locally identified need, to agree who owns LAA targets locally.
HART	Support for the development of a database to measure progress and report against both LAA and local delivery targets.
TEST VALLEY	Workshops and publication/DVD on the LSP's newly developed Joint Areas of Focus, the cross-cutting priorities based on local data, the LAA, partners' priorities and the Local Development Framework (LDF).
ASHFORD	A Local Action Plan for Ashford to form part of the Kent Agreement (the LAA) and to raise awareness of the role of the district LSP partners in delivering the LAA.
MEDWAY	A publication for local residents, community and voluntary groups explaining what the LAA2 is and what it will deliver.
EPSOM & EWELL	Workshop and meetings to agree a vision, priority themes and actions for the LSP and link them with the Surrey LAA.
ELMBRIDGE	Board workshop to develop links to the county SCS, LSP and LAA and discuss the impact of the economic downturn on the SCS.
MOLE VALLEY	Two awayday events to establish what organisations are already doing to contribute to each of the LAA themes/indicators; and to agree a shortlist of projects that partners can work on together that support LAA themes.
SPELTHORNE	Successful joining up of the various agencies on the LAA alcohol target (NI 39) to follow up the LSP Executive's examination of the impact of the LAA on the community plan.
WEST SUSSEX	Workshop dealing with what performance information and action planning is needed to drive the LAA and to report against the CAA.
MID SUSSEX	Meetings of the LSP Executive Board to support the development of a report to allow the LSP to identify the work already being done on its key priority areas, where new initiatives are needed to achieve the objectives set out in the SCS and to clarify the respective contribution of partners towards the delivery of the LAA.



THE PUBLIC FACE OF LSPS

The PtP website provides links to all LSP websites across the region, and offers useful partnership information including Frequently Asked Questions, a jargon-buster of acronyms and terms, and a news service. Does it make sense to link your LSP website to PtP? Contact Alison at PtP for more details:
alison@seemp.co.uk

The introduction of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) this April will support the public's right to know how effectively public money is being spent. CAA aspires to be 'the country's most user-friendly public service reporting system ever', according to the Chief Executive of the Audit Commission, Steve Bundred. As the 'partnership of partnerships', LSPs will need to rise to this accountability challenge by ensuring that they communicate effectively about what they are doing, how well they are performing against targets, and how decisions are made.

A good starting point for LSPs is an accessible website for partners and public. Many LSPs now have their own website or provide information via the Council's website. However, the quality of the content and style varies considerably.

A good website is transparent, accessible, and easy to use, with clear information about the way the LSP operates, easy-to-find links to key documents, such as the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, and contact details.

Notable examples of good practice:

The Milton Keynes LSP homepage begins with a summary which is informative, succinct, open and welcoming:

The Local Strategic Partnership is a high level partnership bringing together a wide range of public, private, voluntary and community interests. Its aim is to promote the sustainable, social,

economic and environmental wellbeing of the people of Milton Keynes. Meetings of the Local Strategic partnership are held on a quarterly basis and are open to the public. Members of the public are most welcome to attend the meetings and, in certain cases, can ask questions. If you would like further information please phone 01908 252389 or email communitystrategy@milton-keynes.gov.uk

The Kent Partnership has a page entitled 'Who are we?', which displays not only members' names and organisations, but also their photos. Aylesbury Vale names its Chair and Vice-chair on the homepage, and one click away is the 'Aylesbury Vale local strategic partnership biography', giving members' names, photos and biographical details. Wycombe, among others, carries a list of meeting dates prominently on its homepage.

What should be easy to find?

It is possible to view Sustainable Community Strategies with just one click of the mouse from almost all LSP homepages, but relatively few link directly with the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Annual reports can provide performance management indications, but again are not yet common. Also rare are concise explanations of how the LSP membership is selected, how issues get onto the agenda, and how decisions are made. The Bracknell Forest Partnership website lists their excellent Handbook, which gives a complete overview of the LSP, as the second item on their homepage.

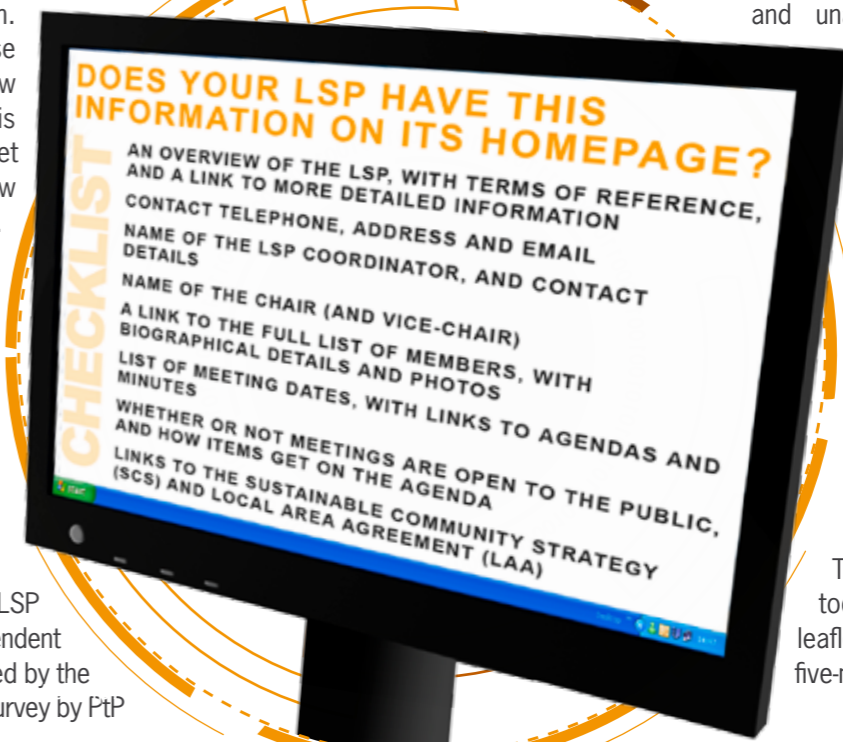
A particular issue is whether or not the LSP website is an independent one, or has been provided by the local authority. A quick survey by PtP

indicates that under half of LSPs have yet to set up their own websites. LSPs can be perceived as being biased towards the local authority, or even being an extension of it, so the convenience of a local authority-provided website may come at a price.

With CAA aiming to 'give local people more information and independent assessment on what their services actually accomplish, and how they compare with other areas', the public accountability of LSPs is important. LSPs perceived as anonymous and unaccountable, or which present themselves publicly in too complex a form, could be regarded as neglecting the new duty to involve their community.

How the PtP Central Fund is helping

In this year's round of the fund, eight LSPs have opted to use their funding for either upgrading their websites or building a completely new one. Other communications initiatives include: the launch of a community TV resource; two communications toolkits; a DVD; newsletters and leaflets; and the Kent Storyboard, a five-metre-long display installation.



Views from a Chairman



Name: Cllr Mark Worrall OBE
Role: Chair of Tonbridge & Malling LSP

partners. We collectively help all partners to 'pitch' ideas to their own parent bodies. The LSP is very useful for networking and creating an esprit de corps.

What governance arrangements are you developing?

I firmly believe that 'progress is more important than process'. We need to get to the core of issues that concern people – that's our focus. We base our governance on what has been good practice locally in line with the Audit Commission's and Ombudsman's guidance on partnerships. We have a short document on governance to be approved at our next meeting.

What are the issues and challenges in working with the County and with so many other Districts in Kent?

There are eight district LSPs in Kent plus the county and Medway (Unitary) LSPs. Canterbury, Dover, Shepway and Thanet have merged to become the East Kent Local Strategic Partnership. I know all the Council leaders involved in their LSPs. Kent is a very diverse county, in respect of its communities, industry, geography and transport. Colleagues in east and north Kent address their

own issues, and there are issues which are special to west Kent. For example, the new rail link to St Pancras means we will not be so well placed in future in terms of commuting. Because we have a large number of people who commute to London to work, particularly in the finance sector, rail services need to be improved. Our unemployment rate is rising faster than in east and north Kent. Affordable housing is a very important priority for us. We have three nationally agreed areas of deprivation – East Malling Ward, Trench Ward in Tonbridge, and Snodland East. We are working with the Borough Council to maximise their resourcing.

We have a different relationship with Kent County Council (KCC), and we get on well. We have to work in a proactive way, to persuade KCC to understand that the 'affluence' of west Kent is a myth. Whenever we set up bodies we always invite KCC to have a place on them.

How are you embedding the Local Area Agreement (LAA) in the work of the LSP?

The formalised messages about the LAA will evolve – as time goes by we will be judged on whether or not we make things better. The LSP is not a delivery agency, but we have among our members lots of organisations that do deliver. Some LAA partnership targets are led by the Borough Council, and some by health sector, KCC, Police, etc. I hope the LSP will make it easier for them to engage partners and deliver.

I firmly believe that 'progress is more important than process'. We need to get to the core of issues that concern people – that's our focus.

Please introduce yourself.

I am privileged to be the first Chairman of this LSP. I am also the Leader of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and I represent the Council on the West Kent Partnership (WKP), which I chaired for three years. The WKP was the predecessor to the LSP and has evolved into an economic partnership with the three member authorities now forming their own LSPs; so the Tonbridge & Malling LSP is relatively new.

As the T&M LSP is so new, how are you building a common agenda amongst members?

We expect our long-term agenda to develop over time. For our first meeting we made sure we had representatives from a good spread of organisations at the highest possible level. We held a kind of poll to select the issues which were most important to people, and this was used as an agenda. Developing statistics and data is important so that we work from a common knowledge pool. We aim to share the Borough Council sources of statistics with

What role do elected members currently have in the scrutiny of the LSP, and what further role do you consider they could have?

The LSP doesn't have a scrutiny function but the Chairman of the Borough Council Scrutiny Committee – also Leader of the Opposition – is one of three members of the Borough Council that sit on the LSP. After the LSP has worked through the first Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) period it would be a good time to get Scrutiny to evaluate us. We have to be careful as reactive scrutiny can impede progress rather than aid it. We also need to ensure that scrutiny takes into account the views of non Borough Council partners as well as the Council's.

Are you optimistic about the LSP?

I am, because we draw on the experience of 25 years of partnership activities. We have a partnership panel of all Parish and Town Councils. We've had the Tonbridge Forum – for our unparished area – for more than 12 years with a membership of about fifty local and voluntary groups. We have the long-term experience of various representative groups, which gave us an advantage when the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) was formed: we were already comfortable with liaison with the non-elected groups in our Borough. The perception of the Borough Council in polls of local residents is exceptionally good. Under Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) undertaken in 2004, we were rated excellent and achieved the highest score of any district council in England and Wales. This gives us a strong base to develop the LSP and ensure it is action-orientated and adds value to the activities and work of individual partners.

The views of the author may not necessarily represent those of PtP and the Host Agencies, South East Employers and Shared Intelligence.



How Local Improvement Advisors can help your partnership

Government has recently recruited a panel of Local Improvement Advisors (LIAs) to support councils and their strategic partners. The LIAs, which build on the work of Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors, will form a panel of experts offering support to local and central government in developing services and building capacity.

The LIAs will support local partnerships to deliver sustainable improvements in public services through:

- the new performance framework
- local area agreements (LAAs)
- multi-agency agreements (MAAs)

They will do this by offering face-to-face advice, coaching, training and mentoring support. The focus of the LIA support is very much on helping partnerships to learn how to do things for themselves, by

building their capacity, capability and skills and sharing knowledge and experience.

As well as being experts in their own field, LIAs will share their experience and knowledge of approaches to problems that have been shown to work elsewhere. The advisors will also add value through their independence and ability to challenge.

The LIA programme is managed on a regional basis. In the South East region, the programme will be managed by Improvement and Efficiency South East - the South East regional improvement and efficiency partnership.

Improvement and Efficiency South East will shortly be producing guidance providing advice to local partnerships on the process for commissioning an assignment for support from a LIA.

For more information and guidance on the LIA programme, contact: Sam Hinton (Project Manager), Improvement & Efficiency South East, 07872 813322, sam.hinton@southeastiep.gov.uk

PtP Events

Visioning Roundtable: Responding to the recession – the role of local partnerships

27 March 2009 14:00–16:00
1 Fitzroy Square, London

Aimed at senior council members, officers and their colleagues from partner organisations, this workshop will explore the implications of the recession on local areas and the role that local partnerships can and should be playing in this context. The events will be introduced by David Walker from the Audit Commission. David will draw on 'Crunch Time', the Commission's recent survey of councils' ability to respond to the recession.

Migrant workers: follow-up event

31 March 2009 15:00–18:00
1 Fitzroy Square, London

Following the success of the Migrant Workers Roundtable event held on 20th January (a report from which is now available in the learning events section of our website) PtP is holding a follow-up event on 31st March. The event will explore practical approaches to managing the impact of migration, focusing in particular on how local agencies can work in partnership to ensure services respond to the challenges and opportunities of migration

LAA Top 10 Indicators Workshop – Reducing CO₂ Emissions

31 March 2009 10:00–16:00
Central London tbc

The latest in our series of 'LAA Top 10 Indicator' workshops, this event will share learning and approaches to NI 186: Per capita reduction in CO₂ emissions in the LAA area. This is the third most popular NI indicator in LAAs across the south east region, appearing in 15 LAAs.

Attendance is free of charge for all PtP events. To book a place, please email Gemma at PtP: gemma@seemp.co.uk

IN BRIEF

Sustainable Communities Act 2007: Local Spending Reports

Arrangements are being made via the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 for the production of Local Spending Reports which will provide information on public expenditure in a particular area. A new consultation paper seeks views on how LSRs might develop over time. Documents available via www.communities.gov.uk.

New Conservative Green Paper on local government

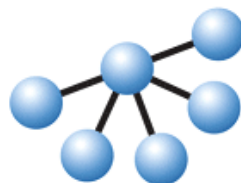
David Cameron has launched a major policy green paper setting out Conservative plans to give local communities greater powers and discretion. 'Control Shift – returning power to local communities', published on 17th February, calls for decentralisation of power to local people, and pledges a reduction in top-down targets. Available at www.conservatives.com.

Scrutiny and non local authority partners

New guidance, due at the end of March, will provide advice on the information that scrutiny committees can request from partners and the extent to which partners will need to 'have regard to' scrutiny reports and recommendations. The Government has commissioned sector-led guidance on the powers of scrutiny committees in relation to specific issues within the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. More information will be available via www.cfps.org.uk.



Improvement and
Efficiency
South East



SHARED INTELLIGENCE

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