

The role of Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements in promoting equalities

Hilary Russell

In conjunction with Eileen Lepine,
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Glossary

AGMA	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
BTEG	Black Training and Enterprise Group
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment
CCF	Community Cohesion Forum
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CVA	Croydon Voluntary Action
CVS	Council of Voluntary Service
DNP	Diversity Network Project
DRG	Disability Reference Group
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EIA	Equality impact assessment
ETAG	Equality Target Action Group
FEDS	Forum for Equality and Diversity in Somerset
GO	Government Office
HIOWEN	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Equality Network
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LAP	Local Area Partnership
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LINK	Local Involvement Network
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
NAVCA	National Association of Voluntary and Community Action
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NHS	National Health Service
NIS	National Indicator Set
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
ODS	Office for Disability Studies
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PIU	Partnership Intelligence Unit
PNF	Participation Network Forum
PSA	Public Service Agreement
RIEP	Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership
SCP	Stronger Communities Partnership
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
ToC	Theory of Change
VCS	Voluntary and community sector
WITHIN	Women in Tower Hamlets Inclusive Network

Executive summary

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are non-statutory public, private and voluntary and community sector partnerships. Over recent years, they have had an increasingly important role in promoting economic, social and environmental wellbeing in their area. This has been pursued via Sustainable Community Strategies (SCSs), which set out local priorities, Local Area Agreements (LAAs), which set out agreed priorities between central and local government, and a diverse range of local delivery arrangements. As voluntary partnerships, LSPs are not directly subject to equalities legislation. But their public sector partners do have legislative obligations to promote equality of opportunity and good community relations.

This study looked at the role of LSPs and LAAs in promoting equality with the aim of highlighting good equalities practice especially in relation to specific dimensions of equality: leadership; communications and messaging; data collection, disaggregation and analysis; compliance with legal equalities duties (for example, through equality impact assessments, differentiated action plans and targets); involvement; diversity in representation, and improved equality outcomes.

The research links with two of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's key strategic priorities:

1. Improving equality of civic and political participation.
2. Improving equality in service provision.

The first of these rests on the assumption that more diverse representation and engagement is not only an important goal in itself, but also a prerequisite of achieving more equal outcomes. This is part of a wider recognition underpinning the brief that better equality outcomes depend upon appropriate processes and ways of working. Understanding the connection between processes and outcomes, therefore, is critical, especially for producing guidance about good practice. The research comprised three main elements:

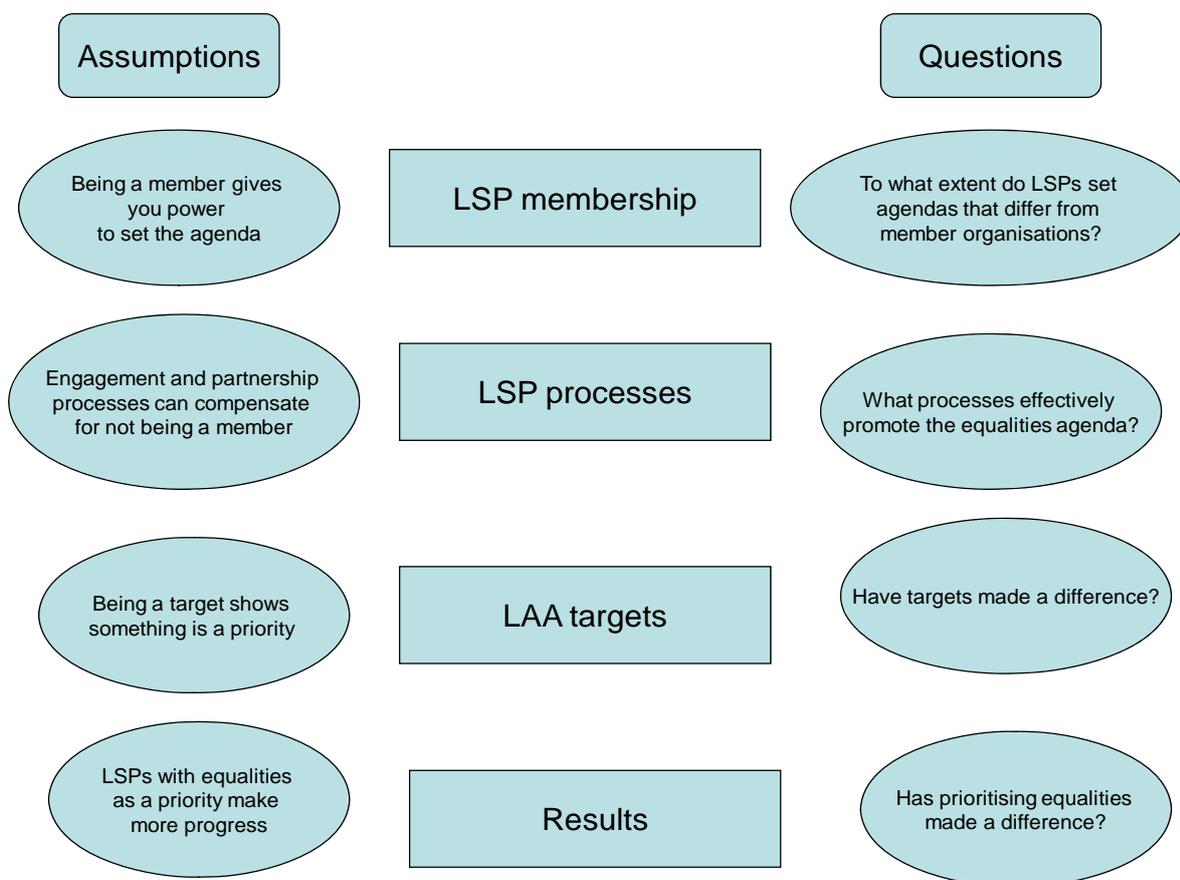
- **A systematic literature review** used online and print sources to explore relevant journals, national, regional and local evaluations, and 'grey literature' such as internal reports and discussion papers.
- **Stakeholder interviews** were conducted with more than 20 stakeholders, drawn from national organisations, such as Communities and Local Government, IDeA, the Audit Commission, organisations representing equality groups and others relating to LSPs such as Government Offices Network and the LSP Futures Group.

- **Case studies** combined documentary review and semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews. The sample covered all the English regions, areas of different sizes and socio-economic composition, urban and rural areas and different local authority types.

Research questions

Figure 1 shows some of the assumptions tested in the research.

Figure 1: Framing the report



The following sections review the assumptions the research was testing and the findings reached.

Key conclusions

Do LSPs set different agendas?

The first assumption was that being a member of an LSP gives you power to set the agenda. The associated question is to what extent LSPs set agendas that differ from those of member organisations. Although LSPs are not themselves delivery vehicles, they can set a general direction for local policies and enlist the support of partners. It is

important to recognise the distinction between the strategic overview role of the LSP and the delivery role of the LSP partner agencies. (In two-tier areas, the distinction between the strategic role of the LSP and the delivery role of its constituent partner agencies applies at both district and county levels.)

SCSs identify priorities and establish local aspirations and LAAs provide a three-year delivery plan. Inevitably a high proportion of mainstream service delivery and funding remains outside the scope of LSPs, but statutory partners generally set out to ensure that their own policies fit with these overarching priorities. For this reason, having equalities firmly embedded in the SCS and LAA is likely to have wide influence. The extent to which equality issues feature strongly as priorities depends considerably on the partners round the LSP table. But it is not clear how far there is a direct correlation between equality group representation on the LSP and the prioritisation of equalities. It appears just as likely that both representation on an LSP and the inclusion of equalities priorities in an LAA reflect the existing approaches of public sector agencies (in particular, those of local authorities) as it does that equalities groups on LSPs pushed for membership and/or the inclusion of LAA equalities targets. It is also clear that representation, while important, is not the only way of ensuring that the voice of equality groups is heard.

The case studies in this research highlighted the wide variation in LSP structures and where equality representatives might fit within those structures. Equality issues were often compartmentalised within particular theme groups or sub-groups. Different interviewees in the case studies gave conflicting messages about how far they felt their presence made a difference to the business of the LSP. If the LSP partnership structures are seen as hierarchical, the ambition of potential members may be to have a seat on the LSP board. However, arguably more influence in relation to specific issues is possible within a theme group. This is especially the case where LSPs have restructured to meet the needs of LAA delivery and have shifted towards smaller, more task-oriented groupings.

What processes promote the equalities agenda?

The second assumption to be tested was whether engagement and partnership processes compensate for not being a member. The linked question was what processes promote the equalities agenda? This study highlighted a number of ways of creating a fertile environment for advancing equalities, including:

- The engagement and consultation methods used by the LSP, which can range from the creation of dedicated structures to imaginative ways of consulting on documents such as the SCS.

- The importance of LSPs and/or their partners resourcing and building capacity in the local voluntary sector infrastructure, which can give them access to representative voices of equalities groups.
- Voluntary sector bodies themselves may need greater awareness of equality issues and to be organised in appropriate ways to represent the constituencies concerned or to influence the LSP.
- Public sector partner organisations also need to be fit for purpose for advancing equalities and hearing the voices from different equality groups. Many are giving greater attention to equalities, including having dedicated staff. One of the anxieties about public spending constraints is that these could be easy targets for cutting.
- Given the significance of the leadership and championing role of local authorities, it is important for officers to support elected members in their engagement with equalities and diversity issues as part of their representative role.

Have targets made a difference?

Although it is reasonable to assume that targets reflect priorities, this is not the whole story. The National Indicator Set (NIS) is not designed specifically to focus on equalities. Some indicators can be disaggregated to target particular equality groups, but securing timely data can be difficult. The Set also has omissions, such as any outcome for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) groups. Some of the perception indicators may provide a gauge of progress – for example, in relation to fair treatment by services – but their inclusion does not necessarily signify any targeted work. In addition, monitoring of progress has to be quite fine-grained to expose deviations from the norm and enable response to specific needs, and most of the national indicators are not gathered at the fine-grained level.

Stakeholders interviewed recognised the need for some national indicators but most welcomed the reduction in national indicators (that the NIS represented) to avoid overlapping targets held by different central government departments. They hoped this reduction would allow policy to be more responsive to local needs. They argued that a good LSP, which understands the needs of its community, will automatically look below the level of national indicators and identify what each priority means for each group. However, the literature review and case studies did not find evidence to suggest that the majority of LSPs did this. The research also found there is need for greater consistency not only across LSPs, but also within individual LSPs with respect to their approach to different equality groups.

The case studies made it evident that while LAAs attempted to tackle inequalities, the focus was often on specific policy spheres (for example, crime or education), where partners thought progress could be made relatively quickly or central government was most interested in monitoring performance. Although issues such as hate crime sometimes

coincide with equality groups' concerns, LAAs will not necessarily cover all equality groups' priorities. The rationale of many LAAs is based on 'narrowing the gap' between deprived and better off areas. Some LSPs explicitly adopt a socio-economic approach to change on the grounds that this will best benefit all. Some consultees thought that government stress on community cohesion can support a focus on excluded groups. On the other hand, others thought it could bring some shades of meaning that risk alienating certain groups and distorting the equalities agenda, such as the Prevent strategy with its focus on addressing violent extremism.

Has prioritising equalities made a difference?

It should follow that LSPs that prioritise equalities make more progress. Although the research sought to establish whether this had happened, it yielded the least satisfactory evidence in relation to hard outcomes. But there are signs of increased joint activity by different agencies, which promises to avoid duplication and waste and be more effective than earlier arrangements. LSPs make a major contribution in creating a culture of partnership. Developing and negotiating LAAs was often a further spur to cementing joint approaches. In other words, much of the equalities activity may still rest with partner agencies, but LSPs have been important enablers of activity. It has been within LSPs that much of the strategic thinking has happened. Partners have also been able to develop greater mutual understanding and greater awareness of the local context and the needs of different groups. The resulting relationships of trust have also been important for bilateral and other linkages leading to greater coordination, service improvement and efficiencies. These may not be directly attributable to an LSP; nevertheless they owe some of their origins to work begun in an LSP.

Looking at good practice

Part of the brief for this study was to look at good practice in relation to specific dimensions of equality. It is invariably easier to recognise good practice than to identify the elements that are replicable elsewhere because so much can depend on local circumstances or the skills and expertise of individuals. In any case, the scope of this study was not sufficiently wide to examine projects in detail, so the examples given indicate the range of practice rather than necessarily signalling good practice. However, this report cites numerous examples which illustrate that there are many dimensions to the effective use of LSPs and LAAs to promote equality:

Leadership

There is always a dilemma about how to build equalities into partnership structures, to ensure that, on the one hand, the issues are not compartmentalised but, on the other, that they are not diluted and lost. A recurrent theme through the research was the importance of leadership in advancing equalities work. It is necessary for maintaining a focus on issues,

ensuring equality representation and monitoring outcomes. Leadership may be demonstrated in different forms:

- Political championing through a cabinet portfolio holder or an individual senior elected member taking up the baton.
- Explicit and visible senior management support.
- Designated equalities champions in the LSP.
- Dedicated officer posts.

Most examples illustrated in the study were within partner agencies of the LSP, but some LSPs had incorporated ways of championing equalities within their own processes. This could be through sub-groups that are intended to drive the equalities agenda, as in Leicester, or by bringing together equalities officers from partner agencies into a network as in Hampshire.

In all cases, the energy and knowledge of individuals is a critical factor. This highlights the value of having dedicated staff who can provide a centre of excellence. To be fully effective, they need to have senior backing and be seen as part of the mainstream rather than as an add-on. Strong advocates within the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and equality groups also help by exerting pressure and bringing external expertise.

The issue of the added value that LSPs bring underpinned the research. As already stated, much of the direct work on equalities – such as dedicated staff, equality impact assessments (EIAs) and support to forums – is often carried out not by the small LSP team but by local authorities or other public sector officers. This may be inevitable given the greater resources available to public sector partners. The effects of this work percolate more widely among other members and are often explicitly or implicitly endorsed by the LSP. It may have practical and symbolic value, therefore, if the work is badged by the LSP instead of only by the agency concerned.

Communication and messaging

There are a number of ways in which LSPs can communicate effectively.

First, there are the consultation mechanisms used in relation to SCSs and LAAs. Consultation tended to focus on ascertaining perceptions of problems and identifying broad underpinning priorities. Equality issues were not necessarily identified nor were equality groups necessarily targeted for their views. How easy it is for LSPs to consult directly depends upon the presence of equality groups and existing links with them. The various equality and diversity forums discussed in this report are examples of potential 'dialogue partners' that can help to inform policy and be a route to communication with the interest

groups represented. For example, the report describes the Equality Target Action Groups (ETAGs) set up by NHS Bolton. These provide a means of informing practice within local health services and feeding back information to the wider community. It is notable that Bolton CVS has a role in supporting the ETAGs.

Second, there are starting to be more imaginative uses of new technology to connect with people, such as the way that Croydon collected views through a video cube, its website and wiki in its Imagine Croydon exercise.

Third, LSPs and their partners can make their strategies, plans and other documents directly available to the public. This is most commonly done through websites although hard copies of strategies are sometimes also available in council offices or other public venues. Often, these documents can also be obtained in minority languages and/or large print, Braille or audio tape. Websites vary in how extensive they are and how easy they are to access.

Fourth, LSPs and their partners can communicate implicit messages about the significance of equalities where they model good practice in their own behaviour, for example in their recruitment and employment practices.

Data collection, disaggregation and analysis

A clear emerging message is that there is a business case as well as a moral case for equality. For many people, the moral argument alone should be sufficient. Certainly this accords with the general value statements in many SCSs. However, it is also the case that inequality has costs not only in terms of wasted human potential and fractured societies but also for the public purse. Data are necessary to demonstrate both needs and costs.

Availability of data – and sufficiently disaggregated data – is a key issue. It is especially problematic in relation to some equality strands such as LGB and transgender. One solution is specially commissioned research. Another is stronger working relations with local voluntary groups, who have service-level data.

The information sought by LSPs is likely to be primarily focused around issues that are critical to the delivery of LAA or other policies. It may therefore be incomplete from the perspective of equality groups. LSP or other public sector priorities may or may not coincide with their main concerns. This suggests a need to look at the links between LAAs and other local strategies to see whether other equality challenges are being picked up in other arenas. LSPs are starting to focus more on data-sharing protocols and joint intelligence units that should also enable better data collection around equalities. Chapter 5 of the report gives examples, such as Sandwell, Croydon and Somerset.

Another challenge is ensuring that the data collected is properly used as intelligence to inform policy and practice.

Uncertainty over the future of the overall performance framework for local government raises issues about how LSPs will measure progress in future. The Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAAs) have been abolished. The Place Survey which has been a key element of the current performance framework has not run in 2010. LAAs are being reviewed with a view to having fewer targets and outcomes set centrally and, instead, greater local accountability. This may provide opportunities for better local integration and pursuit of local priorities. But whatever happens to the national framework, the task of gathering, collating and analysing data will remain. During a period of reduced public spending, when all agencies are focusing on their own cuts, joint intelligence units which share costs should become even more important. But there is a risk that they are undermined as organisations look inward rather than outward.

Compliance with equalities duty

'... in the public mind, recent history has associated the idea of equality with bureaucratic finger wagging and legal restriction. Unfair as this charge may be, unless the British people are persuaded that equality is a liberating rather than an oppressive ambition, it will remain an unfulfilled aspiration.' (Equalities Review 2007, p.2)

EIAs are one means of demonstrating compliance with the equalities duty. This study has indicated both their potential value and the danger that they become a bureaucratic exercise. The report gives the example of Nottingham's attempt to develop an approach that is better integrated, more focused and is more obviously relevant to those carrying out the assessments. The report also points to an LAA and SCS impact assessment toolkit being developed in Somerset.

The approach called for in *What Disabled People Expect... From Assessment to Action* (in RADAR's *Lights, Camera, Action*) also applies to other equality groups:

- Disability equality to be at the heart of the assessment.
- Disabled people not to be treated as a homogeneous group.
- Public bodies to involve disabled people in assessing the impact of their policies on disability equality.
- Feedback and information about the improvements which were achieved.

It is important to move away from the idea that equality is just a matter of compliance with the letter of the law. Compliance is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of improving

equalities practice. Examples through the report show ways in which LSPs have involved people from equalities groups in strategy development and influencing services. The general conclusion, however, is that although different LSPs demonstrate elements of good practice, there is seldom any coherent approach encompassing all the steps from strategic planning through to commissioning and performance assessment and reporting.

Involvement

A prerequisite of involvement in the LSP is the presence of organisations that can be the basis of selecting representatives and/or be 'dialogue' partners that can provide a voice for their interest group. They may take the form of forums, which include a range of equality strands, or group-specific infrastructure organisations and projects. All of these very often depend upon external support and capacity-building by LSPs themselves, their partners or the wider VCS. The report gives examples of equality and diversity forums in Hampshire and Somerset and the way they originated and have been supported so that there is space to raise issues from outside the more narrowly defined LAA process.

The report gives examples of structures and projects relating to different equality strands. They range from bodies set up by local authorities (such as Hull's provision for the involvement of young people and the Essex forum for disability organisations) through to independent forums (such as the ethnic minority forums in Croydon and South Tyneside) and support and advocacy projects (such as Chrysalis giving a voice to transgender people in Hampshire). One of the themes – exemplified in the transition occurring in the Tower Hamlets LGBT Forum – is the journey from professional organisations speaking for their clientele to members of equality groups speaking for themselves.

Diversity in representation

The research findings tend to confirm that some equality groups receive more attention – and may be better organised – than others. And it is significant that the same equality strands tend to be neglected in many places. Areas vary in the nature of their diversity and need to gear their strategies to local circumstances. However, this should not be at the expense of neglecting particular minorities. This in itself is a source of inequality especially as it is not always even recognised either by public bodies or the rest of the VCS.

Even where members of equality groups are on the LSP, presence is not the same as representation. For example, many women on LSPs are there for reasons other than their gender and neither purport to represent women nor have a mandate to do so. Further, people who are counted as representatives by their LSP partners may not be seen as such by their constituency for various reasons. They may be from advocacy organisations rather than themselves being members of equality groups. They may be from a particular faith or ethnic background, for instance, and the processes are not in place to enable them to

speak for others. It may be because public sector partners choose and use repeatedly the same 'usual suspects' to the extent that they are effectively seen as representatives of statutory bodies to their constituencies rather than the other way around.

There are challenges in relation to the representation of equality groups both in securing the inclusion of all equality strands and in spanning the immense diversity within strands. Few LSPs succeed in the first, though they may have members with a brief to represent the different equality strands. For example, in relation to representation and engagement, Leicester demonstrated awareness of the need to designate places for communities of interest on the LSP as well as providing support and training for representatives.

There can also be super diversity within strands; within, for example, an ethnic minority or faith group that incorporates several different perspectives. Highly diverse areas such as Sandwell have recognised that a representative model is unwieldy in these circumstances and have introduced an area-based system of representation alongside a socio-economic approach to tackling inequality. LSPs have frequently developed links with neighbourhood forums or area committees as a facet of their community engagement. This can be effective for some equality groups in particular areas but as a means of outreach needs to be supplemented in relation to groups that are more dispersed or that might struggle to get their concerns onto a neighbourhood agenda. It is therefore important to have strand-based forums that can bring their specific perspectives and information about the inequalities they experience. The evidence from this study supports previous research in showing the wide variation in the number and strength of networks both across different localities and in relation to different equality strands.

Super diversity puts an onus on LSPs to undertake equality mapping and understand the nature of equality communities, in which there might be tensions and disagreements. It means that issues are complex; for example there might be multiple barriers to entering the labour market. The number of groups makes the mechanics of engagement and involvement in the LSP difficult as there are limits to how many people can be physically involved in particular executive meetings. Representation will be undermined if there is no accountability and if there are no means for representatives to engage with those they are meant to represent, both to hear their views and concerns and to give them feedback. To ensure that the mechanisms are in place to provide the best information about different issues and interests, it is necessary to have well-resourced groups that can articulate the case.

The study showed that, on the whole, LSPs do not monitor representation of equality groups and that some groups are more likely to be under-represented than others. Even where it may be very challenging to include all voices at board level, awareness of this

tendency should alert every LSP to examine its own position and take steps towards more targeted consultation and involvement.

Some people may suffer discrimination on multiple grounds because they belong to several different equality groups. There seems to be growing recognition of this in relation to projects that address the needs of 'minorities within minorities', but less awareness in respect of them having a voice. The report gives some project examples that cross equality strands, such as the work in Bolton with Gypsy and Traveller young people and the Age UK work with older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Improved equality outcomes

An implicit question in the study was whether LSPs and LAAs have made a difference to equalities. It was hard to find evidence of hard outcomes, partly because ascertaining and attributing outcomes is difficult and would have required a more in-depth investigation.

There were signs of improvements that affected certain equality groups such as children and young people. In this case, nationally driven targets clearly influenced the priority attached to particular interventions. There were also indications that many areas have succeeded in narrowing the gap between the most and the least deprived, which would indirectly benefit some equality groups. On the whole, however, interviewees felt that LAAs had not so far made as much difference to equalities as the statutory duties on public bodies.

Nevertheless, LSPs have brought an outcome-focused approach. They provide an arena for strategic thinking. They have developed more trust and collaboration across agencies and associated mechanisms of performance management. They enable the involvement of the third sector in general and equality groups in particular. All of these are ways in which LSPs help to create a culture in which equality issues are more likely to be addressed and addressed more effectively.

Looking ahead

The new public sector equality duty

The study found a general welcome for the new integrated public sector equality duty, the socio-economic duty and dual discrimination protection, which at the time of writing are planned to be implemented in April 2011. The equality framework developed by IDeA and the Audit Commission's work has anticipated the new Equality Act, so a gradual change has already started. Consultees particularly welcomed the new socio-economic duty. LSPs and their partners will have to prove that they are addressing socio-economic disadvantage. However, the government is reviewing regulations pertaining to the Equality Act and this may result in a change of emphasis in relation to economic disadvantage.

Nonetheless, consultees raised several concerns about the new Equality Act: fears that the specific duties under previous legislation will disappear; that flexibility reduces the need to do impact assessments; that there is no legal obligation to do a strategy document or action plan for a specific equality group; that the Act does not require the monitoring of equality in respect of faith and sexual orientation. However, the legislation will require public sector partners to provide an evidence base to explain and justify their priorities. Much will depend on government guidance. Most stakeholders did not want too much guidance, but they did want a strong message that all groups must be looked at across all functions.

Local-central relations

There was general agreement that Government Offices (GOs) have had an important support role. They were seen to have a stronger sense of place than Whitehall departments and, given their location, can also work with inspectorates to offer support to partnerships and organisations when weaknesses had been identified. There was a call for more coordination between the GOs, the inspectorates and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) in supporting the equalities dimension particularly in relation to analysing community needs and equalities impact assessment. The coalition government's plan for the removal of regional tiers of administration, such as GOs and regional development agencies, has implications for the coordination and support of local partnerships.

Total Place and the single offer

Total Place is an initiative that looks at how a 'whole area' approach to public services can lead to better services at less cost. The previous government's plan was that from April 2011, local authorities with a strong track record of efficient working were to be able to negotiate with central government for more freedoms under a 'single offer'. Consultees thought that the 'single offer' would strengthen equalities because it would require a coherent analysis of the specificities of place, a full assessment of equalities issues and a full equality impact assessment. But they feared it might also result in the neglect of community engagement. It is important to engage local equality interests in formulating the local proposal for the single offer. Interviewees thought that Total Place needs to be 'people centred' not 'organisation centred'. Another perceived danger is that the focus is on the 'total budget' and savings, rather than the benefits that expenditure/investment can generate for disadvantaged groups.

Future support needs

Successful implementation of the Equality Act at the local level requires considerable support. The Equality and Human Rights Commission along with national and local public agencies have a massive job to do in order to ensure that legislative change results in attitudinal and cultural change.

Active forms of learning (such as communities of practice, seminars, training and development programmes) and peer support, are valuable. The ‘smart equalities’ programmes being developed by Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly IDeA) should be helpful.

A time of uncertainty

The research was carried out prior to the General Election in May 2010. Observations and lessons, therefore, are derived from arrangements, funding and performance management regimes that either no longer apply or will be the subject of significant change. As the coalition government is still determining its policies, it is difficult to anticipate accurately which legislation and programmes will remain in place in future. The context is already quite different from the one in which the research was conducted and the infrastructure is changing through, for example, the abolition of the Audit Commission and the refocusing of IDeA by the Local Government Group to be the Local Government Improvement and Development. Nevertheless, the principle of outcome-based approaches to service delivery and strategy development seems firmly embedded and this means several features of LSPs and LAAs (and now Total Place) are likely to remain, such as partnership working to achieve agreed local priorities.

It is, however, now certain that, in addition to significant public spending cuts, radical changes are imminent. Elements of the performance framework for localities are being abolished (such as the CAA). Some parts of the national, regional and local ‘scaffolding’ are being dismantled (such as GOs and primary care trusts). There seems to be a more *laissez faire* attitude towards LSPs. LSPs and national organisations, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) and Local Government Improvement and Development, need to consider the implications of such radical changes. For LSPs, sustaining their work on equalities may require even closer partnership working: further sharing of information and expertise as well as joint strategies, shared services and posts. Some of the more integrated working that has happened in two-tier areas, for example in London and between county and district councils may provide lessons for LSPs and local authorities elsewhere. Similarly, national organisations need to determine how the roles that GOs and RIEPs have had up to now can be picked up by others to meet changing support needs.

Recommendations and implications

Recommendations for central government

- Provide short, accessible guidance to LSPs acknowledging equalities and making a strong case for them to be treated as part of normal business.

- Allow for local targets as part of a flexible performance management regime to deliver on the equalities agenda at the local level.
- Recognise the importance of regional/sub-regional support to deliver on the new Equality Act and ensure there is the requisite institutional infrastructure (currently GOs, RIEPs, the Commission and the inspectorates) to support the equalities dimension, particularly in relation to analysing community needs and equality impact assessments.
- Integrate equalities into the single offer framework.
- Develop a greater understanding of how the LSP level and potentially the Local Enterprise Partnership level can contribute to the equalities agenda linked to the single offer framework.

Recommendations for LSPs and their partners

- Discuss the LSP's role in relation to equalities and work out the benefits to partners of working together to address equalities issues.
- Monitor representation on the LSP and set up systems to facilitate the accountability of equality representatives to their constituencies.
- Ensure the LSP's understanding of its place is underpinned by knowledge of local equality issues taking account of different equality strands and investing in community and institutional capacity so that all groups can participate.
- Ensure there is effective leadership and that there are champions at the appropriate levels: LSP, thematic partnerships, commissioning and delivery bodies.
- Ensure engagement systems give a voice to those not usually heard and, where engagement and monitoring is sensitive, use methods such as qualitative research and/or working with small groups.
- Apply good practice in the use of administrative data; work jointly on building simple robust systems for shared data analysis across the LSP.
- Consider joint support of equality forums by LSP partners to ensure they have the necessary resources to do their job and recognise this as necessary investment rather than seeing funding to infrastructure organisations as a potential area for cuts.
- Learn from best practice: visit other LSPs; have learning systems and training of LSP members.
- Consider the implications of reduced budgets on equalities work and develop strategies for shared approaches (such as joint staff and intelligence units) across partner organisations and/or across LSPs and local authorities.

Recommendations for Local Equalities Forums, CVSs and national equality groups

- Look at adopting some of the good practice that exists: for example RADAR and BTEG for training and support; Age UK on good practice research.

- Ensure that ‘representatives’ on the LSP have support and systems to consult with and feedback to equalities groups.
- Ensure that there is the opportunity and space for all strands of equalities to have a voice in the operation and decisions of the LSP.
- Support capacity-building at local government, LSP and GO level on being able to listen to equalities groups.
- Think about structures that really give influence: that build from a wide base to gain legitimacy; that give support and are well integrated into planning, monitoring and commissioning structures.
- Locally, consider how to work effectively across the LSP area on multiple identities and needs, such as those of older lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Implications for the Equality and Human Rights Commission

- Investigate how best to work with inspectorates and identify any functions that may arise from the abolition of the Audit Commission and regional governance arrangements both to provide an external driver to improve on the equalities agenda and comprehensive data on performance over time, taking account of the abolition of CAA.
- Provide information on legal obligations and relative performance so that active citizens/organisations may hold public bodies to account.
- Support good practice and draw out the practical implications of what has been learnt so far.
- Help managers within large public bodies/partnerships make the business case for work to promote equalities in employment, engagement and service provision.
- Develop a national information resource on equality strands that are hard to evidence at local level, especially transgender.
- Look at the role of LSPs in promoting a public sector employment policy, working with unions and the Local Government Association on how the workforce equalities will be developed further under the new Act across the whole public sector.
- Revisit this agenda in the light of further research (see below) to see what more can be learnt.

Proposals for further research

- Research on the effectiveness of targets in leading to better outcomes on equalities.
- Research into the implications of recent policy changes (such as personalisation) for commissioning in relation to equality groups.
- Research on the implications for equalities of policy trends such as those embodied in the coalition government’s approach to ‘localism’ and the Big Society.

- Research on the impact of public expenditure cuts on the ability of equality forums to input into local decision-making.

SETTING THE SCENE

1. Introduction

'There can be no fair society if age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and transgender status remain as markers of disadvantage; and there can be no lasting or deep-rooted progress for disadvantaged groups unless we make a robust case for fairness which involves everyone.'

(Equality and Human Rights Commission website)

1.1 Policy background

Introduced in 2001, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are non-statutory public, private, voluntary and community sector partnerships. Over recent years, they have had an increasingly important role in promoting economic, social and environmental wellbeing in their area. This has been pursued via Sustainable Community Strategies (SCSs), which set out local priorities, Local Area Agreements (LAAs), which set out agreed priorities between central and local government, and a diverse range of local delivery arrangements. As voluntary partnerships, LSPs are not directly subject to equalities legislation, although their public sector partners do have legislative obligations to promote equality of opportunity and good community relations.

LSPs and LAAs have been part of the modernisation of local government and governance: to enhance community leadership, improve policymaking, improve services, increase stakeholder engagement, increase accountability and improve public confidence. The 2006 White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (CLG, 2006), talked of a vision of *'revitalised local authorities, working with their partners, to reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them'* (p.7).

The SCS sets the overall strategic direction. It should tell the 'story of the place' – the distinctive vision and ambition of the area – backed by clear evidence and analysis. Government guidance has described LAAs as the 'shorter term delivery mechanism' (CLG, July 2008, p.34) for the LSP's SCS. LAAs set out the 'deal' between central government and local authorities and their partners to improve services and quality of life. They are a requirement of legislation (2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act). First-tier councils are under a requirement to prepare LAAs, and partners are under a duty to cooperate within the framework. The following box shows the 2009 government description of the local performance framework. Some of this has already been changed. For example, Comprehensive Area Assessments were abolished in 2010 as part of the new coalition government's devolution and cost reduction programmes.

Delivering at the local level

New Local Performance Framework

Whether tackling crime, creating more jobs, improving social care, or cleaning up the environment, local services are at the heart of building the sort of places that people want to live in. In 2008, major changes were introduced in the way that national government, local authorities and local service providers work in partnership to deliver better services and an improved quality of life for local residents. These changes are all about finding out what local people need most, prioritising those needs and putting actions in place to deliver results. The framework empowers residents to make sure that their needs are the driving force behind change, while holding service providers to account for what they deliver. This strategy will be delivered through Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

Local Area Agreements (LAAs)

LAAs are three-year agreements between central government and upper-tier local authorities and their partners (such as the Police, the NHS, Jobcentre Plus and the third sector). LAAs set out the agreed priorities for service delivery in all 150 local areas across England and are at the heart of the new performance framework for local authorities and their partners. LAAs are a practical means of devolving decision-making to local service providers and empowering the people they serve. LAAs aim to deliver better services and stronger local economies by focusing effort and resources on the priorities that matter most to local residents.

National Indicator Set

The 198 National Indicator Set (NIS) covers the national priority outcomes which local authorities are responsible for delivering, whether alone or in partnership with other public service providers. Targets in LAAs can only be set against the NIS which gives local authorities and their partners a sharper, more consistent sense of national priorities and their own responsibilities for delivering them. The NIS also ensures there are clearer messages for local people on how well their public services are being delivered.

Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

The performance of local authorities will be assessed by the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The CAA will improve local accountability and responsiveness to citizens, with the assurance and challenge of more risk-based and proportionate assessment and inspection. The CAA will assess whether local public services target effort where improvement is most needed to tackle inequalities within communities, and evaluate the experiences of people whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

*Source: CLG (2009) *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society*, pp.166/167*

1.2 An increasing focus on equalities

LSPs' public sector partners have duties relating to race, gender and disability through the Race Equality Duty (Race Relations Amendment Act, 2000) the Disability Equality Duty (Disability Discrimination Act, 2005) and the Gender Equality Duty (Equality Act, 2006). The key elements of the duties should serve to underpin the work of local authorities in shaping the areas they serve. They variously require local government to promote equality of opportunity, good relations and positive attitudes. There are also laws to protect religious freedom and promote equality of opportunity: Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, the Equality Act 2006 and 2007, Employment Equality Act (Age) Regulation 2006, Employment (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003 and the Human Rights Act 1998. In addition, threats, abuses or attacks because of religious beliefs are classed as criminal offences.

The 2010 Equality Act strengthens protection, advances equality and simplifies the law. It brings together existing duties and extends them to cover age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. Its main provisions include:

- a new public sector duty to consider reducing socio-economic inequalities
- a new integrated Equality Duty on public bodies, and
- protection from dual discrimination (that is, direct discrimination because of a combination of two protected characteristics).

These provisions come into force in April 2011. In the meantime, the IDeA's¹ equality framework for local government prefigures this new approach. It uses the 10 dimensions of 'substantive freedom' (see box overleaf) and the wider definition of equality based on the idea of equal life chances, originally set out in *The Equalities Review: 'An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and opportunity to live in the way people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish. An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be.'* (Equalities Review, 2007, p.19)

Public Service Agreements (PSAs) set out key government priority outcomes, each one underpinned by a delivery agreement across departments and a set of performance indicators. PSA15 addresses disadvantage experienced due to gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. It has five aims (Government Equalities Office, 2008), which include:

¹ The IDeA has now been renamed Local Government Improvement and Development – with no abbreviation. The old name is retained in this report and the website address remains the same.

- greater participation in public life for disadvantaged groups. This in turn refers *inter alia* to effective third-sector representation on LSPs, and
- a better understanding of, and ability to measure fair treatment in the delivery of public services. This includes reviewing different approaches focusing particularly on areas that have prioritised this issue in their LAA.

Equality Review: Ten dimensions of equality

- **Longevity** – including avoiding premature mortality.
- **Physical security** – including freedom from violence and physical and/or sexual abuse.
- **Health** – including wellbeing and access to high-quality healthcare.
- **Education** – including being able to be creative, to acquire skills and qualifications and having access to training and lifelong learning.
- **Standard of living** – including being able to live with independence and security and covering: nutrition, clothing, housing, warmth, utilities, social services and transport.
- **Productive and valued activities** – such as access to employment, a positive experience in the workplace, work-life balance, and being able to care for others.
- **Individual, family and social life** – including self-development, having independence and equality in relationships and marriage.
- **Participation, influence and voice** – including participation in decision-making and democratic life.
- **Identity, expression and self-respect** – including freedom of belief and religion.
- **Legal security** – including equality and non-discrimination before the law and equal treatment within the criminal justice system.

Source: IDeA, (2009) Key principles of the Equality Framework for Local Government

Two National Indicators (NIs) used as part of the local government performance framework, (which may be subject to change under the new coalition government), specifically relate to PSA15:

- NI 3 – Civic participation in local areas.
- NI 140 – Fair treatment by local services.

Their inclusion in LAAs, however, does not necessarily signify a greater focus on equalities as other NIs can directly or indirectly impinge on equalities issues. Some relating to socio-economic outcomes can be disaggregated to assess how specific groups are faring. NI 7 refers to ‘an environment for a thriving third sector’. This is relevant to the role and capacity of organisations promoting equalities as part of the voluntary and community

sector. Then there are perception NIs that seek to determine how people feel about their area and their place within it:

- NI 1 – percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- NI 2 – percentage of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood
- NI 4 – percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality, and
- NI 5 – percentage of people who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

LAA guidance (CLG, 2007) underlined the need for local authorities and their partners *'to be aware of the public sector equality duties, to take active steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality and, in some cases, promote good relations between different groups'* (p.15). An issue arising from this is how far LSPs have the quantity and quality of evidence to determine whether their public sector members are fulfilling their duties and measure the impact of the delivery of the LAA on different groups. The Aide Memoire for Locality Managers in Government Offices indicates that *'LAAs should demonstrate an understanding of the makeup of the area (ethnic minority, younger/older people, faith, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc) and any particular issues around particular groups, their attitudes, experience, take up of services and needs'* (GOYH and Government Equalities Office, 2008, p.2). As well as reflecting this understanding in the 'story of place', there should be evidence of consultation with equalities groups and/or the use of impact assessments to gauge how far equalities have been considered in developing the LAA.

1.3 The research project

This study looked at the role of LSPs and LAAs in promoting equality with the aim of highlighting good equalities practice especially in relation to the following dimensions:

- leadership
- communications and messaging
- data collection, disaggregation and analysis
- compliance with legal equalities duties, for example, through equality impact assessments, differentiated action plans and targets
- involvement
- diversity in representation, and
- improved equality outcomes.

The research links with two of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's key strategic priorities:

- Improving equality of civic and political participation.
- Improving equality in service provision

The first of these rests on the assumption that more diverse representation and engagement is not only an important goal in itself, but also a prerequisite of achieving more equal outcomes. This is part of a wider recognition underpinning the brief that better equality outcomes depend upon appropriate processes and ways of working. Understanding the connection between processes and outcomes, therefore, is critical, especially for producing guidance about good practice.

The brief prompted further research questions including:

- Are LSPs and LAAs appropriate vehicles for tackling equality issues?
- Are they more appropriate for some equality outcomes than others?
- What are the factors within the LAA/LSP processes that encourage or inhibit the achievement of equality outcomes?
- How far has an equalities dimension been embedded from the start of the LAA process?
- Are equality duties informing the approach to data sharing, commissioning and procurement by the LSP?
- How effectively are equality impact assessments being used in LAA development?
- How effective are national and regional support arrangements both for the LSP members and for the wider community input into the process?
- How effectively do current performance management arrangements reveal the extent to which equality outcomes are being achieved?
- How well does the National Indicator Set measure progress and fit in with the local government equality framework and the performance management proposals in the Equalities Review?
- Are LSPs looking at cross connections between different equality groups?

It should be noted that this research project was conducted looking at arrangements under the previous government. The position is currently more fluid. Some of the tools and policies affecting LSPs and LAAs no longer apply and others may be subject to change. The report reflects the retrospective nature of the research but draws out potential implications for any new arrangements between central and local government.

1.4 Research methodology

The research comprised three main elements. A systematic **literature review** used online and print sources to explore relevant journals, national, regional and local evaluations and 'grey literature' such as internal reports and discussion papers. Appendix 1 gives details of the sources and the search terms used.

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with more than 20 stakeholders, drawn from national organisations such as CLG, IDeA, the Audit Commission, those representing equality groups and those relating to LSPs such as the GO Network and the LSP Futures Group. As a result of the literature review and signposting by some of the stakeholders interviewed, the study identified and followed up other examples of practice.

The third element was 10 **case studies** (see Appendix 2). Each one combined documentary review and 10-15 semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews. Most focused on individual equality strands while also looking at LSP engagement across the range of equality groups. Others concentrated on the LSP's overall engagement with equalities. The sample covered all the English regions, different types and size of area, urban and rural areas, and different local authority types. This meant that the context in which LSPs were working varied considerably:

- Population size ranged from 150,000 to 1.4 million.
- Population make-up varied in age profiles (from above average proportions aged over 60 years old to above average proportions of those aged between 20 and 34) and in the size and diversity of ethnic minority populations (from less than four per cent to nearly 50 per cent).
- The sample included counties with high levels of income and only small pockets of deprivation as well as the 10th, 14th and 38th most deprived authorities in the country. This spread tended also to be reflected in the variation in, for example, employment, crime and health figures.
- At the time of the fieldwork, there were four Labour controlled councils, four Conservative, one Liberal Democrat and one with no overall control.

The fieldwork was carried out during spring 2010.

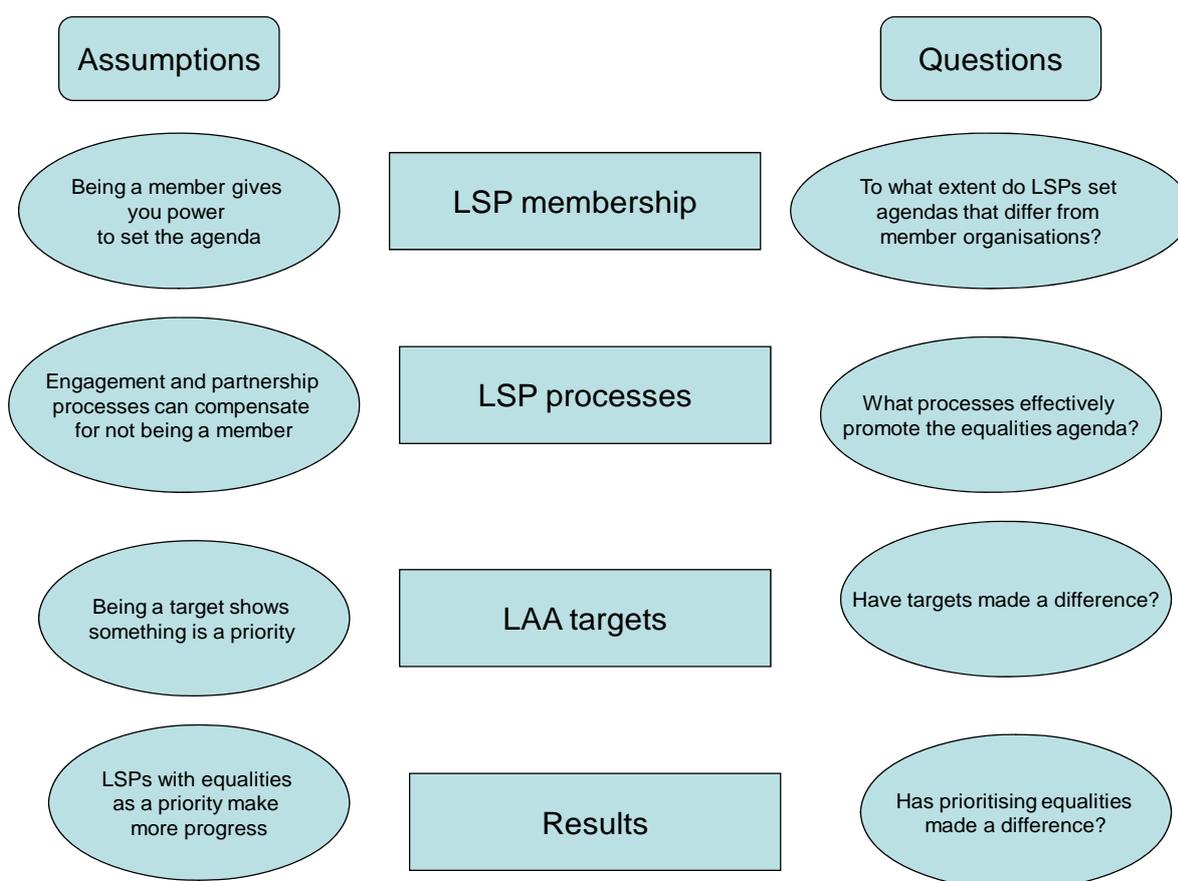
The topic guides for the interviews took account of the theory of change (ToC) being tested in the National Evaluation of LAAs and LSPs. The ToC is based on three change mechanisms integral to the operation of the LAA/LSP framework. These are:

- Trust and relationships: new approach to planning and priority and target setting between the centre and localities.
- Service improvement: supporting collaborative action.
- Efficiency: new performance and funding arrangements.

The underpinning assumptions of the ToC correspond with those of the improvement model supported by the Audit Commission and many of the other stakeholders interviewed. These argue that the improvement circle starts with good engagement. This leads to

an understanding of different needs and encourages further engagement. In turn, there is improved commissioning and more effective targeting of pooled resources. The end result is better outcomes and greater efficiency. Figure 1.1 presents some of the specific assumptions that the research was testing in relation to equalities and LSPs and LAAs and some of the associated questions. This captures the research questions diagrammatically and in summary form, and provides a framework for reporting the findings.

Figure 1.1: Framing the report



1.5 The report

The report weaves together the findings from the three elements of the research. The next section (Chapters 2 to 4) focuses on governance, including partnership in LSPs and aspects of involvement and empowerment. It also looks at infrastructure: both general voluntary and community sector bodies and equalities forums, and those for individual equality groups. Chapters 5 and 6 look at the way that LSPs and their partners are taking the equalities agenda forward, in particular through LAAs. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss the significance of the findings, identify issues for further consideration or research, and outline the lessons that can be drawn from the research.

ENGAGING IN GOVERNANCE

2. Partnership in LSPs

2.1 LSP organisational structures

This chapter focuses on the involvement of equality groups in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The nature of LSPs as voluntary partnerships means that there is no standard pattern of either membership or structure. They vary considerably in the way they are organised. Typically they might include:

- a partnership board for strategic decision-making
- a partnership executive/steering group/public service board comprising chief officers
- thematic partnerships
- thematic sub-groups which may or may not be commissioning groups
- technical working groups or task groups, and
- neighbourhood forums or local area partnerships.

In addition, there may be a community or voluntary and community sector (VCS) forum, which might be a network of networks and/or might mirror the LSP's structure by having its own thematic groupings.

The One Leicester Partnership structure provides a fairly typical illustration of the extent and complexity of LSPs. It encompasses over 50 groups. The full partnership has over 50 members and beneath this there is:

- An executive board with 16 members representing different sectors and including community representation.
- The Leicester Partnership Strategic Board – the chairs and Lead Officers of the Strategic Theme Groups.
- Five strategic theme groups (Environment; Children and Young People; Health and Wellbeing; Safer Leicester; and Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership). Under each of these are commissioning groups and thematic sub-groups.
- Two cross-cutting theme groups: Talking Up Leicester and the Stronger Communities Partnership.
- Under the Stronger Communities Partnership, there is the Equality and Diversity Partnership; Neighbourhood Working; Community Cohesion Executive; New Arrivals Strategy Group; Refugee and Asylum Seeker Multi-Agency Forum.

The spread and complexity of these structures shows that there are many potential entry points for the involvement of equality groups but also that, in this instance, there are certain groups with a stated focus on aspects of the equalities agenda.

In 2008, a survey of all English LSPs (Russell et al., 2009) was addressed to LSP coordinators. It asked about the effectiveness of arrangements. Respondents saw statutory partnerships, such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, as the most effective parts of the structure. But the majority also thought that their partnership board was either very effective or effective. Relationships between the board and other parts of the LSP were less effective, in particular with area or neighbourhood bodies.

2.2 LSP membership

The same survey found that not only is there a difference in the spread of membership across LSPs, but also that the involvement of certain groups had gone down recently. Table 2.1 gives the figures for 2004, 2006 and 2008, which show a consistent level of membership of voluntary sector umbrella organisations but a decline for others largely since 2006. In part, this may reflect the redirection of Community Empowerment Funds² and the consequent demise of some Community Networks. However, it is also symptomatic of LSPs restructuring following the advent of LAAs, with the aim of becoming more fit for the purpose of ensuring LAA delivery.

Table 2.1: Voluntary and community sector membership of LSPs

Organisation	2004	2006	2008
Voluntary sector umbrella group	90%	91%	92%
Voluntary sector organisation/individuals	79%	80%	66%
Community Network	55%	53%	39%
Faith organisations/individuals	66%	71%	59%
Residents groups/individuals	49%	49%	27%
Ethnic minority groups/individuals	56%	58%	40%
Area or neighbourhood forums/partnerships	50%	54%	40%
Other voluntary and community sector	27%	34%	23%

Source: Russell et al., 2009

The survey also asked about councillor involvement in LSPs. This is primarily provided by executive or cabinet members. The involvement of others tends to be more tenuous,

² In 2001, the government invested about £96 million in Community Empowerment Funds, Community Chests and Learning Chests to encourage community involvement over the next three years in the 88 most deprived areas of the country as part of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Funding continued later but the ring-fencing was removed.

perhaps through neighbourhood forums. When asked about how well councillors fulfilled a number of specific roles within the LSP, respondents largely rated them very positively. However, it is relevant to this study that nearly half thought that the role of making effective links with groups who are not usually heard was poorly fulfilled.

Two-tier authority areas create additional complexities for LSPs. Essex, for example, covers 12 district councils and five primary care trusts. In Hampshire, there are 11 districts and in Somerset, five. Each district has an LSP and a Sustainable Community Strategy. The overarching, county-wide LSP has to connect with all of these, both strategically and through its membership.

2.3 Equality group involvement

Given the lack of uniformity nationally, the picture in relation to equalities groups across the case study LSPs is predictably disparate. For example, there may or may not be specific representation for communities of interest. In some places, the emphasis is on engagement through theme groups. This may be across all such groups or there may only be places on theme groups that are seen as having a particular focus on equalities. Even when there are places for equalities groups, there is not necessarily any policy in place about how people will be chosen to fill them. Representation of equalities groups may come via the VCS. In this case, although representatives may come from a particular equalities group, they may be elected to speak for the sector as a whole, not just for their own interest group.

In 2008, Equality South West (Equality South West 2008) undertook a regional survey about consultation on LAAs. This went to LAA Co-ordinators, LSP equality and diversity representatives and South West Regional Equality Networks, their constituent organisations and some local equality groups. It also produced interesting findings about representation. For example, the coordinators' responses indicated that:

- Each LSP was structured differently: some had specific seats for equality and diversity representatives; others organised equality and diversity forums outside to feed into the LSP.
- Transgender was only represented on Bristol's LSP, and sexual orientation and gender were the second most underrepresented strands with representatives on just three out of the 10 LSPs.
- Eight out of 10 said the LSP consulted with other equality and diversity organisations as well as those represented on the board or on equality and diversity forums.
- LSPs varied in the support they provided to enable equality groups to engage.
- All coordinators confirmed a need for equality training for LSP members.

In the South East, the Government Office commissioned work to gain a picture of how local authorities engage with organisations representing equality interests (McHale and Hughes, 2010). This found that although most had mechanisms in place to deliver the duty to involve, there was a problem in nearly a quarter of places. Some strands were only marginally covered by most local areas: particularly sexual orientation, transgender and social inclusion. Religion or belief was also an area for further development, especially in engaging non-Christian groups. There was considerable variation in the delivery of a range of activity that should promote equality outcomes: LSPs, LAAs, Equality Standard/Framework and EIAs.

Blackburn and Darwen LSP had a Workforce Representation Group. Recognising that together, the public sector LSP partners have a significant workforce, the purpose of the group was to make opportunities available to all citizens. The box below shows the range of activities hosted by the Borough. However, the Blackburn with Darwen Partnership has now agreed to change the name of the group and widen its remit, partly to ensure that the LSP partner organisations meet the requirements of the Equality Act. The group's new name is the Equality, Diversity and Cohesion Group. It aims to support the People and Communities Forum by promoting, for example:

- the development, review and implementation of a comprehensive equality, diversity and cohesion work programme
- joint equality mapping and sharing of data and research intelligence, and
- the development of a joint equality scheme/framework to support a partnership approach to joint EIAs, toolkits, action plans and training.

Blackburn with Darwen: Equalities activities hosted by the Borough

- Women at Work event (attended by over 250 delegates).
- Faith at Work event (attended by 40 delegates with a focus on the Religion and Belief Regulation 2003 and good practice).
- Diversity and Cohesion Training (attended by 72 LSP delegates from the Workforce Representation Group).
- Job application support, accessed by 1,025 people, of which 834 were from underrepresented groups.
- Charity event to promote community cohesion by bringing different groups together.
- Disability 360° involvement seminar (attended by 120 people from 20 organisations), resulting in the introduction of a disability equality scheme to be monitored by a newly formed working group.
- Older People's Strategy in conjunction with Age UK.

- Equality at Work Conference with speakers from Age UK, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (including the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive) and Lancashire Constabulary (attended by 200 people from 32 different organisations).

Leicester LSP has recently revised its structures and has now agreed that each of its theme groups should have equalities input (see box below). It is unusual to have such comprehensive coverage of equalities and for there to be such explicit recognition of the importance of support to enable effective involvement.

Representation in Leicester

Until 2009, VCS representation on Leicester Partnership was primarily via neighbourhood representatives. In 2009, Leicester Partnership increased seats for the VCS representatives to 25: 14 for communities of interest representatives and 11 for neighbourhood representatives (the latter were never acted upon). There are two places for each of the following seven communities of interest (equalities groups): women's groups; disability groups; ethnic minority groups; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups³; older people's groups; faith and religion groups; youth groups.

Support for the VCS in Leicester to bring its voice to the work of the LSP

As the VCS is very large and diverse with varying infrastructure, the job of representing it is much more difficult. For this reason, the partnership has commissioned a key 'host' VCS organisation to help each of the communities of interest representatives to engage with the partnership, and provide support and develop infrastructure to help those representatives to engage with the organisations they are representing. These organisations are the Leicester Race Equality Centre, LeicestHERday Trust, Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living, Leicester Council of Faiths, Young People First, Age UK and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Centre.

Leicester LSP also recognises the need to give support and training to community and community of interest representatives:

³ Note that very often in local forums and similar, transgender is classified within sexual orientation rather than within gender as in equalities legislation. Transgender is a term used by people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex. Whereas physical differences define sex, gender identity is about the inner sense of knowing oneself to be a man or a woman. Gender role is about how people behave in society and is different from sexual orientation. Most often, sex appearance, gender identity and gender role are consistent but, for a few people, there is a mismatch between the way they look and the way they feel. People experiencing gender dysphoria often live for many years in the gender role that society expects of them. Some eventually undergo transition to live permanently in the gender role that is more comfortable for them; this is referred to as transsexualism.

- Officers meet with them before a partnership meeting to outline the agenda and format of the meeting and to discuss any support and/or additional information needs to enable representatives to contribute to the meeting effectively.
- The partnership undertakes skills audits to identify areas for development and training and support needs for representatives. This enables training and support to be tailored to individuals and organisations.
- There is support for representatives with a disability. For example, the LSP has had sign language interpreters at meetings to enable a deaf person to participate.
- The role and responsibilities of representatives (including equalities groups) are set out clearly and explained to representatives (see box on p.22).

In Hull, equalities groups are not directly represented within the LSP, but are represented through the VCS. As elsewhere, individual members of the various LSP bodies may also be members of equalities groups, but their participation is not in that capacity. There is an Equalities and Cohesion Standing Advisory Group that is tasked to provide strategic advice and guidance to the LSP on the equalities agenda in general and to challenge the LSP's performance. Its role is to:

- provide expert advice to the family of partnerships on equalities and cohesion
- appraise major schemes, initiatives and plans in order to flag up gaps or threats, especially through impact assessment techniques;
- undertake in depth analysis of relevant factors affecting the city, and
- develop and deliver key strategies and policies.

The route for equalities groups to get involved is through the three places reserved for VCS members. Currently, its membership includes a representative from Age UK and one from a local social enterprise concerned with gender equality.

In South Tyneside, the LSP board has a representative from an ethnic minority, and a representative from a disability third-sector organisation as well as the chair of the Third Sector Partnership, L3SP. However, there is no particular emphasis on direct representation on the LSP board or priority sub-groups. Here, other mechanisms offer opportunities for participation apart from direct representation (see Chapter 3).

In Bolton, equalities groups are indirectly represented at strategic level on the Bolton Vision Steering Group through the VCS Chair and Chief Officer and representatives of two faith-based groups, Bolton Council of Mosques and the Church Leaders' Forum. Overall, the partnership structures place significant emphasis on religion and race.

The Sandwell LSP Board has 30 members, eight of whom are elected community representatives. These are area-based. Although in practice, there is *'some diversity in terms of older people, younger people, ethnicity and disability'*, the LSP abandoned the representative model because it was felt to be impossible to represent the 'superdiversity' of the borough without the structure becoming impossibly unwieldy. Although not universally supported, this approach is linked to an emphasis on tackling inequality through tackling poverty. One interviewee noted, *'We don't structure in that (representational) way. We look at equalities for the LSP rather than individual groups by looking at service delivery or cross cutting poverty. Not looking at it in a rigid way but Borough wide. Poverty is the biggest deprivation factor'*⁴. This emphasis on the significance of socio-economic status anticipates the new socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010 and underlines the importance of looking at cross equality issues through a lens of social and economic trends.

Tower Hamlets has a mix of third-sector and community places on the LSP board: Muslim and Christian leaders from the Inter-Faith Forum, the Young Mayor and Deputy Young Mayor, two places for third-sector representatives and eight places for the resident co-chair of the Local Area Partnerships. Presence on the thematic delivery groups varies. There are four places for young people on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, but no direct involvement of equalities groups on the other Community Plan Delivery Groups.

2.4 No uniform pattern

Thus, the message from the case studies is that LSPs take very different forms in different places. It is difficult, therefore, to generalise about the role of LSPs in any context or with regards to any policy matter. Arrangements reflect local circumstances. For example, in rural counties, there is a differential distribution of equalities groups and the county-wide LSP works with and alongside district level ones. Different forms of representation may also happen at these different levels. Wide ethnic diversity can prompt greater awareness of diversity issues more generally. Another pertinent factor is the strength of the local VCS infrastructure, which can affect the strength of third-sector involvement and whether or not equalities representation is channelled through the sector.

There was a strong belief among stakeholder interviewees that engagement is fundamental to understanding different needs. It was argued that because communities vary in different areas, LSPs have to find appropriate ways of reaching out and understanding their communities. This research showed very different approaches to engaging equalities groups. Sometimes it is via membership of the LSP, with indirect representation via the VCS as one route or through sub-groups feeding in to the main LSP. Wider consultation

⁴ Where not otherwise referenced, quotations throughout the report are taken from interviews with stakeholder and case study participants.

processes may also be used to ensure that the LSP addresses equalities issues, irrespective of its membership.

However, this examination of membership and involvement of equality groups in LSPs has also highlighted a lack of clarity about what representation constitutes. Quite often the presence of members of equality groups is seen to equate to representation even though there are no mechanisms to link the individuals concerned with their wider constituency. Others may either be unaware of their role or may not acknowledge them as representative. Figure 2.1 shows the checklist produced by National Association of Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA, 2010) based on the CLG *Principles of Representation: A framework for effective third sector participation*. This indicates the questions that need to be asked in relation to third-sector representation. Some questions are addressed to LSPs. They underline the need for resourcing and support if participation is to be effective. Others implicitly acknowledge that there is also an onus on the representatives themselves to be fully engaged with their sector. The next chapter looks further at the support required to enable engagement.

Figure 2.1: Principles of representation checklist

Principles	Checklist			
1. Accountability	Process for supporting third-sector reps?	Resources for wider engagement available?	Clarity around who leads on service delivery?	Clearly defined responsibilities in MAA/multi-tier areas?
2. Equality	All six equality strands* representatives consulted?	Equalities issues taken into account?	Equalities duties embedded?	Services regularly reviewed and equalities-proofed?
3. Leadership	Third sector properly represented?	Third sector engaging with elected members?	Third-sector reps involved in decision-making?	Clarity at LSP around third-sector priorities?
4. Openness	Information shared with wider sector?	Decision discussed at LSP board and sub-groups?	Procedure to ensure transparency of decision-making?	Third sector participated fully in decision-making?
5. Purpose	Priorities recognised and accepted?	Clear objectives established?	Full engagement with citizens/communities?	Wider sector fully signed up?
6. Sustainability	Funding for service delivery by third sector identified?	Third-sector reps adequately resourced/funded/trained?	Long-term funding to support sector engagement secured?	Long-term plans in place?
7. Values	Grassroots rather than 'top-down' proposal?	Local commitment to independence of third sector?	Commitment to best use of resources?	Commitment to benefit/making a difference?

*Gender, Race, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Age.

3. Involvement, empowerment and infrastructure

This chapter looks at the forums and other bodies that can provide the basis for identifying representatives and supporting them in their representative role. It focuses on general VCS and equality and diversity groups; the next chapter turns to infrastructure bodies coordinating single equality strands.

Methods of consultation and involvement in local decision-making have increased over recent years. They range from Citizens' Juries to area-based forums. In principle, these should provide an opportunity for greater engagement of a wider range of communities of interest. However, each raises questions about inclusiveness, equality and representativeness (Newman, 2002). People and groups can be excluded because they are not defined by official categories or included in the selection process. Consultation may only be carried out with the 'usual' individuals or organisations rather than with less well-networked groups or those that would be more challenging. In geographic areas, the residents included may not necessarily represent the diversity of the area.

3.1 Compacts

The last government agreed a national compact with the third sector, that is, a statement of principles and commitments to frame relationships. Similarly, there are compacts at local level between statutory agencies and third-sector organisations. Although these do not usually refer specifically to equality groups, they are significant in setting the parameters for relationships.

In 2009, the Tower Hamlets Third Sector Strategy underlined the importance of the third sector in tackling poverty and inequality and strengthening community cohesion. It identifies five ways in which the council can support the achievement of a thriving third sector (NI 7):

1. Infrastructure and support – developing both strategic and technical support to enhance the work of the third sector.
2. Volunteering – supporting the third sector to achieve the highest standards when involving volunteers.
3. Voice and representation – making sure that the voice of the third sector is heard effectively across the Tower Hamlets Partnership.
4. Commissioning and funding – improving the financial relationship with the third sector.
5. Premises – supporting third sector organisations to access high-quality premises.

The compact sets out the terms of statutory sector commitments under the headings of independence, funding, policy development and communication. Third-sector organisations

agree to principles and actions under the headings of governance, representation, service delivery and communication.

3.2 Umbrella organisations

Notably, at the time of the fieldwork (2010), Tower Hamlets was the only London Borough without a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) or equivalent. The Change-Up Consortium has been fulfilling some roles for an interim period: organisational development, capacity-building, development and support of forums, bringing organisations together to get a mandate for creating a new CVS. The Third Sector Strategy commits the Council to working with partners to develop a new CVS to be a key leader in the LSP and to provide:

- Leadership – championing the needs and views of the third sector at a strategic level.
- Advocacy and representation – providing mechanisms for other third-sector organisations to be involved in planning and delivering services.
- Partnership building – supporting collaboration between third-sector organisations.
- Enhanced communication – within the sector and between it and statutory agencies.

Croydon is an example of an LSP making strong use of its local infrastructure organisation, Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA), to facilitate a wide-ranging Community Network. The principle of equal representation is said to be fundamental to Croydon's partnership ethos and is reflected across the family of partnerships making up the LSP. The council gives core funding to CVA, which takes a leading role in supporting and representing the local VCS. It has been integral to Croydon's approach to community engagement, capacity-building and commissioning. The Community Network, originally funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, shadows the activity of the LSP Board and Chief Executives' Group. Representatives from the Community Network are elected onto thematic and other partnerships and are responsible for feeding back to the Network. The Community Network is linked to a wide range of networks and forums representing sub-sectors or groups within the community, such as the Children and Young People's Network, the Older People's Network, the Mental Health Forum, the Faith Forum and the Refugee Forum.

In Somerset, at the time of the fieldwork, there was representation of equalities groups on the LSP via two bodies: the Forum for Equalities and Diversity in Somerset (FEDS) and the Community Cohesion Forum (CCF) (Appendix 3.1). The Somerset Strategic Partnership and the County Council have supported both of these by commissioning a local organisation – Compass Disability Services – to work with them. For FEDS, the support has included a paid officer developing and implementing a work programme including the maintenance of a website, meetings and membership events. For the CCF, the council and Compass have shared a post for taking forward the community cohesion delivery plan. Although FEDS was intended as the mechanism through which equalities issues would be

represented in the Somerset Strategic Partnership, the position has in fact been more complex. Both FEDS and CCF have had a representative on the Forum, which meets biannually. In addition, there have been members from the Race Equality Council and the Youth Parliament and a faith representative. However, they have not been represented on the board, where there has been a representative of Somerset Voluntary Sector Network. Below this level, involvement in the thematic groups has been more ad hoc, largely reflecting the agenda – for example, Age UK as well as FEDS are on the Stronger Communities Group and young people are on the Children's Trust.

Nottingham City Council has a Community Equality Forum (Appendix 3.2) to provide a one-stop shop for consulting with representatives from across six equality strands. The production of the city's disability equality scheme is an example of the way it can work. A sub-group of volunteers from the Forum was established, including disabled people, but (recognising that disability cuts across all equality strands) also involving non-disabled people. The sub-group met regularly during the development of the scheme and continues to meet to monitor progress. The Forum has been engaged in commenting on the LAA and developing the Nottingham Plan to 2020 (SCS). The chair has been instrumental in establishing the One Nottingham's (LSP) Fairness Commission to drive forward equalities within the Nottingham Plan.

Hampshire has two key partnerships that drive equalities and diversity. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Equality Network (HLOWEN) involves each of the 11 district councils, three Unitary Councils, NHS, Police and Fire Service, and the Network provides mutual support for equality issues. Secondly, there is the VCS and especially the Hampshire Diversity Support Project, which has led to the recent establishment of the Hampshire Independent Equality Forum (see Appendices 3.3 and 3.4). The Forum links with local diversity forums where they are established and, it is felt locally, has already been successful in raising the profile of equalities groups in general and specifically a local transgender group (Chrysalis – Appendix 4.4) and the Gypsy and Traveller community. The Forum's steering group has representatives from each of seven 'equality strands'. The steering group is currently setting the strategic direction of the Forum and intends to act as a conduit between public sector organisations and diverse individuals and communities from across the county. Hampshire County Council has commissioned this forum to develop an external challenge role and it is felt that this may well be developed to support other LAA partners.

In South Tyneside, the LSP has developed a new structure for the voluntary and community sector called the Local Third Sector Partnership (L3SP). It mirrors the LSP and its theme groups (Appendix 3.5). This replaces the local Community Empowerment Network. The LSP recognised that it needed to garner the voices of local people and the L3SP attempts to do this. It is a pilot in its early stages. In addition, Community Area Forums can feed

residents' views into the LSP. This mix of thematic and geographic approaches helps to enable the involvement of ethnic minority residents who are largely concentrated in certain parts of the borough. The third-sector chair of a multi-agency race equalities forum attends the LSP's Safer and Stronger Communities Priority Sub-Group. South Tyneside Council also has routes through which interest groups can relate to the council. An Equality and Diversity Group brings together council and other officers with communities of interest including: LGBT; Young People's Parliament; Compact for Racial Equality in South Tyneside (CREST); Forum 50; disabled people, and Gypsies and Travellers.

Leicester Partnership is committed to fostering stronger and empowered communities where life opportunities are not restricted on grounds of age, disability, religion or belief, gender, race or sexual orientation. It has a Stronger Community Partnership, which acts as the strategic umbrella body bringing together the public, community and voluntary sectors. The purpose is to encourage the development of strategies, practices and interventions within the LSP and in the implementation of the LAA that give meaning to its commitment. The Partnership has a formal constitution and membership. Its scope is shown in Appendix 3.6, but it is currently under review with a view to strengthening its remit in order to drive activity on community cohesion (NI 1); new arrivals; neighbourhood working (NI 5), and equality and diversity (NI 140). The Stronger Community Partnership is also being given the power to influence funding schemes relevant to its remit such as the council's Community Cohesion Fund and the Migration Impacts Fund.

The role and responsibilities of Leicester Partnership representatives are set out clearly in a document called *Being a Leicester Partnership Member: Information for VCS groups*. This also states the rationale for engaging the VCS and the benefits of engagement for the sector. Representatives (and all other members on the LSP) have five main roles:

The 5 Cs – roles of Leicester Partnership members

- **Comprehend** the issues facing the organisations they represent and understand the responsibilities, objectives and agenda of the partnership.
- **Consult** with people in their organisation or among wider groups (such as faith groups, women's groups etc) when necessary in order to bring information, issues or recommendations to the Partnership.
- **Contribute** to decision-making on behalf of the community of interest.
- **Communicate** the role, work and decisions of the Partnership back to their communities of interest.
- **Cooperate** with the delivery of One Leicester, with other partners and with each other.

3.3 Involvement in consultation

The LSP Survey (Russell et al., 2009) asked about LSP activities over the past two years. Over 90 per cent of respondents reported 'engagement with communities and excluded groups' as a very important or important activity. When asked about future priorities, this was one of the top five priorities for 55 per cent of the top tier LSPs and for two thirds of district LSPs. It was a higher priority than in 2006 for all types of LSP. The boxes below illustrate ways in which LSPs consulted on their SCSs. In some places, there is growing emphasis on improving engagement methods through ongoing intelligence-gathering and using mechanisms such as the Place Survey, rather than relying on one-off exercises.

Imagine Croydon

The LSP has recently run a large community engagement exercise, Imagine Croydon, involving more than 20,000 people over eight months. Local people were asked to imagine what they wanted Croydon to look like in 30 years. Views were collected through standard mechanisms, and through a video cube, website and wiki. The LSP also developed a toolkit for community organisations to develop their own engagement activities. The resulting document – *We are Croydon: This is our vision* – was agreed by the LSP and adopted by the Council Cabinet in early 2010. It will be adopted by partners and will inform strategic planning across LSP members.

Consultation on Hull's SCS

Over 1,000 community and voluntary groups were contacted for their views on Hull's future direction. Every nursery, primary and secondary school, college and university in the city was asked to assist in the consultation process. Teachers took advantage of the process to promote citizenship among the city's young people. The consultation programme was supported by a publicity campaign using print, broadcast and online media. Advertising on radio, billboards and buses reminded everyone to 'Have your say in Hull's Future'.

The consultation document was also available in other formats, such as large print, different languages, audio and Braille. Roadshows were held across the city to discuss the vision and provide the opportunity for people to give feedback. Local events were used to consult with the city's growing multi-cultural community. Online consultation forms gauged local, regional, national and international opinion through specialised websites.

There were also events with partner organisations. The local authority used the Place Survey and the People's Panel – 6,000 people locally who act as a bellwether on many issues. Hull All Nations Alliance (HANA), the ethnic minority umbrella organisation, was

also able to feed back into the process, as were other VCS groups. The Youth Parliament of the city was closely involved.

South Tyneside LSP has held a series of Innovation Days focusing on creative solutions to its priorities to decide on the area-based grant projects for its LAA top 10 priorities. Key decision makers, managers, budget holders and frontline staff came together with 'communities of common interest'. Tower Hamlets 2020 Community Plan was produced after consultation with over 400 residents from the eight Local Area Partnerships and sessions with the Interfaith Forum, the Disabled Access Group, the LGBT Forum, Tower Hamlets Housing Forum and extra work with young and older people. In Croydon, equalities groups felt that they were consulted at every step in the development of the SCS. They were involved in a number of ways: their representatives on the LSP board were responsible for discussing the strategy, and were encouraged to report back to their groups and collect further comments and views; the Council approached individual equalities groups for feedback, and there was full consultation across the borough, and individuals could also comment on the draft.

3.4 Engagement messages

This chapter has given numerous examples of good practice both in relation to infrastructure bodies and consultation by LSPs. It has also illustrated a number of issues. First, there is a wide range of consultation and involvement methods now being deployed and there is increasingly imaginative use of new technology. Invariably, too, consultation documents are available in different formats and languages. Nevertheless, it is apparent that equalities groups are not necessarily targeted as consultees. Secondly, the research has underlined the importance of local VCS/equality forums' infrastructure for enabling LSPs and their partners to have access to representative equality and other often unheard groups. These local voices are perhaps most likely to be effective if their own organisation reflects the main themes of the SCS and LAA. There have also been implicit issues relating to the need for public bodies to support infrastructure organisations and forums in building their capacity without jeopardising their independence. Where it is given at all, such support more often comes from public sector partners, particularly local authorities, than from LSPs themselves.

4. Equality strands

This chapter examines engagement in relation to different equality groups and also starts to anticipate some issues that will be covered in the next section of the report on taking the equalities agenda forward.

4.1 Young people

Children's Trusts are statutory partnerships and Children and Young People's Plans are statutory documents. It is very often the case that membership of the Trust will be confined to people working with children and young people rather than young people themselves, but there are exceptions. In Tower Hamlets, as well as having the Young Mayor and Deputy Young Mayor on the LSP board, there are places for four young people's representatives on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

In Hull, young people are able to participate through a Youth Council, a Customer Panel and a Young People's Parliament (Appendix 4.1). The Children's Trust uses the Youth Parliament as a consultation vehicle and tries to ensure it is not just used to rubber stamp local authority schemes. Instead, the Parliament is encouraged to debate big issues and bring resolutions to the Children's Trust. Initiatives started through this process include an accreditation scheme for local businesses on recycling.

The assistant director for commissioning in Hull Council's Children's Services Department is also the lead on children's voice and influence and works to integrate young people's views into the commissioning process. A high proportion of children's and young people's services are commissioned from specialist third-sector children and young people's organisations. There are examples of projects commissioned directly in response to feedback from young people, such as an inclusive bicycle scheme for disabled children. Young people are sometimes involved in the tender panels for commissioning, for example, on the summer play activities tender, staff recruitment and Building Schools for the Future. There is a standing forum of young people who are consulted on tenders although other groups are also assembled on an ad hoc basis depending on the client base for the contract: for example, disabled young people.

There have been examples of regional initiatives to empower young people, such as those of the National Empowerment Network in Yorkshire and the Humber. In a Yorkshire project, young people talked about what empowerment means to them (see box overleaf). In 2008, Bradford Youth Summit brought together 240 young people to debate local services, facilities and relationship building in their city. There was a particular focus on issues around racism and extremism. Young people wanted to play a part in myth-busting. They were concerned that resources designed to prevent radicalisation and extremism may

engender a 'divide and rule' process within communities of different cultural backgrounds. They indicated that racism and extremism can be seen as uncomfortable areas for discussion in schools and that there is a growing need to create a safe environment for them to talk about such issues.

Empowering young people

Messages from a residential for 16 to 21 year olds:

'If statutory bodies really want to empower young people, then they have to be prepared to start engaging with them on the same level as they would with their own adult peers. Decision-makers need to accept that young people are redefining the ways in which they feel best able to find solutions and make contributions – these may seem unconventional to adults, but are the norm for young people. Young people are ideally placed to provide community intelligence on what is potentially needed to address economic and social deficits that are still prevalent for particular areas and certain sections of the community.'

Barriers in relation to influencing others and getting their voice heard are:

- stereotyping
- ageism
- experience 'because we are younger'
- class – treated differently on basis of postcode, district or educational institution, and
- racism – association of gangs and gun/knife crime, etc.

COGS, May 2009, *Voices from Experience: The Power of Young People – What empowerment means to us*, Yorkshire and Humber Empowerment Partnership (www.yhep.org.uk).

4.2 Older people

Opportunity Age is the government's strategy for an aging society first brought out in 2005 (DWP, 2005). It acknowledges age discrimination as a cause of the exclusion of older people and brings together policies across Whitehall departments. The strategy aims to end the perception of older people as dependent and ensure that longer life is healthy and fulfilling and that older people are full participants in society. As well as work and income, it focuses on:

- active aging, which includes ensuring that older people can be actively engaged locally in influencing decisions that affect their lives (Chapter 3), and

- services that promote wellbeing and independence in ‘a society where older people are active consumers of public services, exercising control and choice, not passive recipients’ (p.44).

There are more than 620 senior citizens’ forums in the UK with a membership of more than 200,000, often supported by Help the Aged and Age Concern (now combined as Age UK). These forums can be a means of connecting with LSPs. The box gives the example of South Tyneside’s Forum 50. Elsewhere, older people’s forums are often linked with wider community forums or VCS networks. However, sometimes representation within LSP structures may come through organisations working with older people, such as Age UK, which has a place, for example, on the Tower Hamlets Healthy Community Delivery Group.

Forum 50, South Tyneside

Forum 50 (formerly known as the Older People’s Parliament) was launched in October 2005. The aims of the forum are to:

- Provide a voice for older people to enable them to play a full part in their community.
- Promote social inclusion, health and wellbeing among older people.
- Develop practical projects in partnership with other agencies which will utilise the skills, experience, knowledge and expertise of older people.
- Encourage intergenerational work.

Forum membership is open to anyone over the age of 50 living in South Tyneside. Working groups have included social care and health and crime and safety.

The Older People’s Forum has strong representation on the LSP: on the 50+ Partnership, the Health and Well-Being Partnership and the People and Communities Forum.

Elsewhere, new mechanisms are being developed, often more directly linked with service commissioning and delivery (Appendix 4.2). These are more likely to be created by partners within LSPs than by the LSP itself (see Chapter 5).

4.3 Gender

The academic and policy literature on gender identified in the literature review almost all related to women. The literature review indicated that women’s organisations are underrepresented on LSPs in relation to their size in the VCS. However, while many voluntary and community sector organisations are not gender specific (and there are few exclusively male organisations), this does not mean that they are not dealing with women’s issues. Women’s roles in LSPs were seen to follow particular gender stereotypes in terms

of their expected and actual roles (Gudnadottir et al., 2007). For example women were most commonly seen to take up roles as community representatives, thematic partnership representatives or administrators of LSP boards. They have less senior roles than men. They are underrepresented as LSP Chairs, probably due to an overall underrepresentation of women on LSPs (Bedford et al., 2008). However, a relatively high proportion of the women who were members of LSPs were chairs of their LSP.

Few support mechanisms for the engagement of community members are tailored to the needs of women (Gudnadottir et al., 2007). Similarly, there were no structured ways of ensuring that women's perspectives were heard. Some literature suggests that women tend to prefer less bureaucratic, more informal ways of proceeding in meetings (South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre et al., 2008). Barriers to women's involvement are said to include the attitudes of men present at meetings; a belief that their presence made no difference; boredom; too great a volume of literature to be read, and practical concerns, such as the cost and availability of childcare and lack of public transport (Sangini et al., 2009). Some of these issues are not confined to women: some men would also argue that they have too much to read or that their presence makes no difference.

Oxfam conducted two pilot projects with LSPs in Sunderland (Sangini et al., 2009) and Thurrock (South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre et al., 2008), looking at the representation and participation of women in LSPs and how needs differ by gender. A report based on these projects, *Getting Women into LSPs* (Oxfam, 2009), highlights the need for concrete steps to involve women more effectively in local decision-making to improve their economic and social wellbeing. Recommendations include asking LSPs to:

- collect, analyse and use gender-disaggregated data in routine performance management
- make gender-disaggregated data available at board and executive group level within quarterly performance reporting to inform strategic decision-making
- routinely use gender-disaggregated data to understand needs and impact of service delivery
- use it to inform target setting and to gear interventions differently for men and women
- develop systems and ways of working that remove cultural and structural barriers to women's participation
- encourage diverse voices and ensure women's issues and perspectives are addressed
- ensure a shared understanding of concept of gender in relation to issues considered by the LSP
- ensure training and awareness-raising around the duty to involve includes gender
- monitor compliance with equality legislation
- set up a gender advisory group

- agree a protocol for all partners to adopt in relation to women's issues and participation, and
- proactively support women's organisations in raising women's issues, having a voice and challenging discrimination.

The Government Equalities Office and CLG funded the Women Take Part research to examine the participation of women, especially underrepresented women, in governance and decision-making in community and public life. A report (Bedford et al., 2008) summarising the research findings suggested that the Women Take Part Framework (Appendix 4.3) could be used by organisations to explore areas of good and bad gender equalities practice and discover what needs to be done to improve women's 'journeys' towards critical engagement as citizens. Although the stages identified ('not being involved'; 'getting there'; 'being there'; 'staying there') are presented as a progressive sequence, real life is more complex. In practice, women will take different routes through the steps.

One example of a women's network is Women in Tower Hamlets Inclusive Network (WITHIN), a network for voluntary sector women's organisations and women's projects in the borough. These organisations play a key role in promoting women's involvement in community and public life. WITHIN provides a vital point of contact for information, consultation and community involvement on issues of concern to women in the borough.

This research has also found that many LSPs do not specifically include gender organisations. *'I think that's because... nobody has banged that drum and said we feel as women we are excluded, discriminated against... or they feel strongly that they need to organise and coordinate activity to make sure women get a seat at the table.'* (Interviewee)

Similarly there were indications that where women were involved in theme partnerships – not necessarily in a representative capacity – it tended to be in relation to children and young people, health, wellbeing, and safer and stronger communities more than economy, jobs and enterprise. Domestic violence, appropriately, tends to feature within the 'safer communities' theme. Although an issue that particularly affects women, it is not exclusive to women and, as the box below illustrates, there may be more services for female than for male victims.

Monitoring domestic violence in South Tyneside

NI 32 'Reducing repeat incidents of domestic violence' is included in the South Tyneside LAA. It is monitored, therefore, although this target is only concerned with the most serious 'at risk' cases (estimated at the top 10 per cent) which are dealt with by the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). MARAC began in June 2008 as a result of

government guidance on domestic violence. It was necessary to get accurate data during the first year so that the baseline was set in 2009. As well as being disaggregated by gender, the data are disaggregated by sexual orientation, ethnicity and disability. Most cases seen by MARAC are women. Figures for men are very small in comparison, even lower for LGBT and disabled people; figures for men and ethnic minorities are comparable.

The police also keep data on all cases of recorded domestic violence, but it is only from December 2009 that the police have disaggregated data by gender (and not by other equalities groups). These data showed a higher than expected proportion of male victims and led to concern about the lack of services available for male victims of domestic violence and concern to alter existing services, which focus mainly on women, to meet their needs.

There is a major issue with unreported domestic violence and how to capture these figures. There are attempts to collect anecdotal evidence from the various support services. In areas where recorded figures are especially low, there have been campaigns to encourage people to report and seek support. Where the figures are high, campaigns focus on prevention issues.

Funding has come from the LSP's area-based grant to support domestic violence work through funding independent domestic violence advisors, who support men and women.

4.4 Transgender

Although there are many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) forums, strictly transgender is a dimension of the gender equality strand (see Chapter 2, note 1), as outlined on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website: *'Trans (or Transgender) is an umbrella term used by people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex. The term includes, but is not limited to, transsexual people and others who define as gender-variant.'*

No official estimate of the number of trans people exists and there is scarcely any publicly collected data. No major government or administrative surveys have included a question where trans people can choose to identify themselves. There is growing recognition that transgender people face discrimination, inequalities and social exclusion by policymakers and the public. Research with transgender people shows that a very high proportion have experienced transphobic harassment (Morton, 2008).

Some responses to the consultation around the single equality scheme (CLG, 2010b) argued that an explicit commitment was needed to promote equality for transgender and transsexual people. Human Rights law within the European Convention on Human Rights, as embodied in UK law in the Human Rights Act 1998, gives some protection to

transgender people. To date, the European Court of Human Rights, and the House of Lords have only addressed two Articles of the Convention in relation to transgender people: the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence and the right to marry and found a family. Press For Change is an organisation specialising in transgender law. It runs a legal advice service part funded by the Commission. It sees scope for further intervention in the areas of some of the other Convention Articles.

The introduction of the 2010 Equality Act is likely to raise awareness about dimensions of equality, such as transgender, that have hitherto been neglected. Tower Hamlets is a local authority that has developed a transgender policy statement. Again, it has been the council rather than the LSP taking this forward, but as the council is a major partner in the LSP, the development of such policy statements has helped to raise awareness more generally and to create an ethos in which issues can be addressed.

Very little research has been conducted into the participation and representation of transgender people in the democratic process (Mitchell and Howarth, 2009). The lack of data on transgender and the reluctance of transgender individuals to risk encountering prejudice mean that their concerns are seldom raised in local forums except when they overlap with lesbian, gay and bisexual issues. Research in the South West into consultation on equality and diversity during the development of LAAs found that it was only in Bristol that there was representation of transgender on the LSP (Equality South West and GOSW, 2008). Raising the profile of transgender issues is, therefore, highly dependent on organisations such as Press For Change that can provide a voice for them. Chrysalis in the south of England is one of the few local transgender organisations. Its experience points to both good and poor practice in terms of engagement with public agencies (Appendix 4.4).

4.5 Disability

'Involving disabled people, proactively seeking to promote disability equality and identifying ways in which poor performance in this area could adversely impact on a public sector body has been very positive. Many public sector organisations have come to value this approach not just because of improved outcomes for disabled people but because of benefits to organisational performance, improved efficiency and higher satisfaction rates from service users and stakeholders.' (RADAR, *Lights, Camera, Action*, p.6)

CLG recently funded an empowerment project run by RADAR, the Disability Network. A publication coming out of this (RADAR, *Empowerment*) contains an 'influencing toolkit', which asks the question 'who can I influence?'. Although it refers to LSPs (and LAAs) in a list of organisations having an interest in housing and neighbourhood policy, workshops on

influencing and leadership that backed up the publication were aimed at LSP partners rather than directly at LSPs and LAAs.

Other publications recognise the need for materials to support disabled people's involvement in decision-making bodies such as LSPs. The Office for Disability Issues (ODI, 2010) produced a simple, well-presented document that explains LSPs, SCSs and LAAs and the possible routes to involvement. It then gives tips, many of which are equally applicable to other groups, on:

- 'making a real difference' through involvement, being clear about its purpose, being focused, getting buy-in at senior level (for example from the LSP chair) and distinguishing the partner role from a campaigning one
- how to represent other people by networking, informing, keeping in touch and giving feedback
- planning involvement – working with other groups to agree which issues should be raised, when, where and by whom, and
- using their expertise on disability issues, access and inclusion.

Local authorities have varied arrangements for involving disabled people. Essex County Council has a strategy planning and commissioning consultative body, the Participation Network Forum (PNF) (Appendix 4.5). The Adults and Community Well-being Directorate supports this and sees it as the key body for linking disability groups, service users and officers. It acts as a critical friend for the Disabilities Equalities Scheme. The County Council/LSP's communication and consultation strategy uses two strong disability groups, Disability Essex and Essex Coalition of Disabled People, and there are early signs of potential involvement in commissioning.

The Tower Hamlets model is different. There, the Pan-Disability Panel mirrors the Community Plan themes in its organisation and enables involvement to varying degrees and through a variety of means to suit participants (Appendix 4.6).

After holding three events to engage people with disabilities, the London Borough of Islington set up a disability reference group (DRG) of 12 local disabled people, two from each of the six main impairment groups⁵. The Council funds a local borough-wide organisation of disabled people to facilitate and manage the DRG. The DRG meets regularly with the Council's Disability Equality Performance Group, which scrutinises performance on the disability equality scheme.

⁵ These groups are classed as blind and visually impaired people; deaf and hearing impaired people; people with learning difficulties; people with mental health needs; physically impaired people, and people with hidden impairment, including progressive conditions such as HIV and Multiple Sclerosis.

4.6 Race and ethnicity

The race equality duty was the earliest to be introduced and is thus probably the one most likely to be acknowledged and acted upon by local partners. Nevertheless, the 2008 LSP Survey found that fewer than 40 per cent of LSPs included ethnic minority groups or individuals among their partners, although upper tier LSPs were significantly more likely to include them than district level LSPs (Russell et al., 2009). Work by the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG, 2009) indicates that ‘far more work is needed to support local communities become involved in LSPs’ (p.3) and that ‘the infrastructure which supports the involvement of community and equalities groups in LSPs is fragile’ (p.4). It concluded that there is scope for an independent, national organisation such as BTEG to play an honest broker role to help local networks build links with LSPs. This work has started in three regions: London, the East Midlands and the North East.

A report on engagement and empowerment among ethnic minority and other equalities communities in the South West (Evaluation Trust and Southwest Foundation, 2008b) identifies a number of barriers. Past experience of latent or overt racism can have lingering effects. Experiences of stereotyping, mistrust, overt hostility and racism lead to deep suspicion. It suggests there is a growing feeling among ethnic minority people *‘that not only are they now considered one homogenous group but that, in policy terms, the focus has now shifted away from any concern with racism to one that is dominated by issues of community cohesion, faith and counter-terrorism agendas’* (p.37). It asks for understanding of *‘the impact of placing "equalities", "community cohesion", "human rights" and "engagement and empowerment" in different conceptual boxes due to the different words being used. There is no engagement and empowerment if people feel disempowered through not having their human rights met, being discriminated against or feeling fearful of their neighbours. This use of language is perceived as a way of diluting or parking difficult issues’* (p.38).

Language is important: both how ethnic minority communities are referred to and how issues raised are described. A lack of accurate demographic data can minimise and obscure ethnic minority people’s place in the region and make it difficult for their needs to be made explicit. Structures and organisational cultures matter. A ‘project’ culture and short-term funding can work against embedding engagement and empowerment and against developing a basis of trust and learning for future work and may undermine sustainable empowerment work.

The research in the South West turned these findings into positive learning points, which is illustrated in the box overleaf.

Towards ethnic minority engagement and empowerment: learning from the South West

Key learning points about factors that may enable embedding ethnic minority engagement and empowerment:

- Acknowledge history – different starting points and cultures.
- Build trust and commitment through partnerships.
- Examine the ‘representative’ role in structures (what do those represented prefer: inspirational leadership; a direct voice; local forums?).
- Develop mechanisms for sharing good practice between organisations and communities.
- Make a commitment to work through community development principles across sectors – different ways of engaging and empowering that start where people are and use different media.
- Raise awareness of consensus points and build on these to reduce fear and discrimination.
- Understand that small well-networked groups can bring real achievements; this requires community development approaches throughout organisations.
- Provide adequate resources and recognise this is a process not a finite project.
- Acknowledge and use the knowledge and expertise of groups concerned about what will work in terms of engagement and empowerment.
- Make more provision for English language teaching in ways appropriate to cultures among new migrants/refugees.
- Build motivation through demonstrating local achievements, which requires monitoring and evaluation.

Engagement and Empowerment among Black and Minority Ethnic and other Equalities Communities in the South West of England, The Evaluation Trust and South West Foundation, 2008

For information on the role of ethnic minority forums, see also Appendices 4.7 and 4.8 about Croydon and South Tyneside. Both have ethnic minority forums that feed into their LSPs and local other policymaking structures. As well as each having a representative role, both see the need to promote networking across, and capacity-building within, the different ethnic minority communities in their areas.

4.7 Gypsies and Travellers

Gypsies and Travellers come under Race Equality measures, but can also have distinct issues (for example see Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009b). In Bolton,

Gypsies and Travellers are recognised locally as a significant equalities group. The Greater Manchester Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation and Service Delivery Needs study (arc⁴, 2008) estimated there were 1,574 people in the Gypsy and Traveller population within the Bolton District. Bolton Council's earlier Gypsy and Travellers Strategy estimated that there were at least 250 known Gypsy and Traveller households with the majority living in 'bricks and mortar' housing. The strategy also noted that there were two private caravan sites in the borough, as well as the Council's own site, which had 26 pitches each with room for a static and mobile caravan.

However, they are not directly represented on the LSP board and the VCS link with Gypsies and Travellers is not particularly strong. Bolton's Gypsy and Traveller Strategy/Service and its Traveller Education Service exemplify thematic delivery-level activity as distinct from LSP-level strategic overview. It was the Council, not the LSP, that produced a well-received Gypsy and Traveller Strategy (2006-2011), one of the first following new guidance from ODPM in 2006, and was commended for this by ODPM/CLG. It was the first such strategy in Greater Manchester and the North West. While there are no identified Gypsy and Traveller Champions among local politicians, the Council has a policy of taking newly elected executive members on site visits as part of their induction.

The Gypsy and Traveller Strategy has not, as proposed in the document itself, been formally updated. As an interviewee put it, '*things turnover, things slip, people change*'. But it is still valid. The Strategy's proposed Multi-Agency Task Group, for example, is more virtual than formal (operating via emails, telephone, etc). While the health and education dimensions of the original strategy remain relevant, the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community are now tackled by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) at city-regional level. The focus has shifted accordingly. The AGMA work on Travellers' accommodation needs carried out by arc⁴ consultants involved extensive consultation with Gypsy and Traveller communities across Greater Manchester including Bolton. The survey work was managed by the Northern Network of Travelling People (NNTP) and undertaken by Gypsy and Traveller fieldworkers and the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain (Lancashire Section). This consultation gave the research added credibility so that AGMA was able successfully to challenge some of the assumptions over accommodation needs in the North West's Regional Spatial Strategy. The approach represented good practice in community engagement using Gypsy and Traveller 'representatives'. It was felt to be important to involve Gypsy and Traveller residents '*in a way that means something to them*' in a fair and open approach.

Trust is very important in relationships with Gypsy and Traveller communities and it is essential to know the politics of the communities and families on sites. In Bolton, the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer from the Council's Gypsy and Travellers Liaison Service is

deliberately based in the community room on the caravan site. The Council's Travellers Education Service (formerly, Education Service for Gypsies and Travellers) and Health Visitors also visit the site on a regular basis and Community Police Officers meet there. A community group was set up on site but people changed (such is the nature of the community) and it dissolved. The Liaison Service is now encouraging Gypsies and Travellers to set up their own self-help group and providing identified support.

4.8 New communities

'...the research provided evidence to support the conclusion that fluidity and super-diversity do indeed pose additional challenges for community engagement in local structures of governance. Newer arrivals were identified as being those least likely to have their voices heard effectively. These groups included migrant workers from the accession states, as well as refugees and asylum seekers, with varying aspirations and needs.' (Blake et al., 2008, p.ix)

A number of the case study LSPs have been aware of the needs of new communities in their areas. In Sandwell, there has been an emphasis on migrant workers and asylum seekers. Refugees and asylum seekers are one of Bolton's social inclusion target groups. Tower Hamlets has set up a New Residents and Refugees Forum, which allows new communities to have access to local policy negotiation and ensures dialogue between new communities and service providers.

In one district within Hampshire, particular issues have arisen as a result of the recent arrival of ex-Ghurkhas. For example, the desire of the Nepalese community to have a place of worship has been contested by some existing residents. Such disputes also create tensions for elected members. Here the Council tried to defuse the situation by exploring the potential for providing a building for joint community use. At the heart of the issue is *'visible change in the community and people feeling uncomfortable with it'*.

'It is OK to say equalities exist and organisations should provide fair treatment but we need to understand the core beliefs of residents in 2010. Legislation must be there but there are difficulties in trying to force attitudinal change. It's... about getting people in a room and asking them why they're worried and why they're unhappy about their future. It's about prevention.' (Interviewee)

In 2010, the District Council secured Connecting Communities and Migration Impact Funding around issues of cohesion. The funding enabled dialogue. The Council wanted to avoid the issue becoming a faith division and used specialists to help in working with the community. It was felt that using a consultation company and Local Impact Advisors and

Groundwork enabled expertise to be secured for a relatively small amount of funding. *'It was too good an opportunity to miss. It helps to move the Council's equalities development agenda forward.'* The successful use of community engagement specialists in handling some of these issues exemplifies the importance of practical support and the difference that specialist expertise can make in equalities work.

4.9 Religion or belief

Different approaches to presence and representation are especially evident in relation to faith groups. The 2008 LSP Survey showed that 58 per cent of LSPs have faith organisations or individuals as members. However, this can range from having a bishop on the board, more in his capacity as significant local leader than in a representative capacity, through to more formally organised faith forums electing representatives. Depending upon the local context, the emphasis may be on involving the Christian churches or making links with minority religions. Faith representation may or may not be channelled through the VCS.

A research report that focused on faith-based voluntary action (Lowndes and Smith, 2006) noted that diversity in governance structures and resources between and within religious groups can affect the relative ease of policymakers engaging with different groups and vice versa. There can also be difficulties where an individual is asked to represent and report back to a variety of communities.

'Faith communities sometimes find it easier to work with secular partners than to cross the cultural boundaries of working with other faith traditions. This can cause issues of duplication and competition which can prevent effective joint working and sometimes, unintentionally, find faith groups competing with each other for resources and funding.' (Williams, 2008, p.13)

Faith groups are very often long established in, and have a deep understanding of, local communities. One rationale for their involvement is their representative and leadership role in communities and broader networks and partnerships. They can help 'plug the "governance deficit" especially in disadvantaged areas' (Lowndes and Smith, 2006). Nevertheless, there can be perceptions of hostility or lack of understanding among local officials and in some elements of the 'mainstream' VCS. Recognising that faith-based bodies do not always have the same access to participation, funding and tendering opportunities as the rest of the third sector, CLG recently published a 'myth buster' (CLG, 2010d). This is designed to address anxieties that, for example, faith groups might primarily be intent on proselytising or would discriminate against certain people. It also dismisses the idea that *'if you engage with one faith community you will always have to*

engage with all the others in the same way and all together'. Rather, it indicates that engagement should be appropriate to a given context.

The research found various examples of interfaith forums or networks working in very different contexts (Appendices 4.9, 4.10, 4.11). In Hampshire, the deputy leader of the County Council, who is also the champion and public face of equalities and diversity in the county, was instrumental in setting up the network and now co-chairs it. In Tower Hamlets, the chair of the Forum is a member of the LSP board and is extensively involved, for example, in local activity around hate crime. In Bolton, partners currently represented on the LSP Vision Steering Group include three faith groups: Christian, Hindu and Muslim (Appendix 4.11). As well as their connection with other faith organisations in Bolton Interfaith Council, they all link into the Bolton Harmony Forum, a sub-group of the LSP's Stronger Communities Partnership.

Various reports have identified issues and needs around faith representation. There is a need for capacity-building within the faith sector to develop representative structures and governance skills, including leadership (Lowndes and Smith, 2006). It is also important to promote partnership working between faith organisations and local infrastructure organisations (Edwards, 2008).

The Home Office commissioned work (Berkeley et al., 2006) to identify particular needs of faith representatives on key local public partnerships to fulfil their roles effectively and recommend support and resources needed. This work found that although LSPs are the only form of local public partnership to endorse the concept of 'faith representatives', even some LSP coordinators were confused about faith representation. Role and function are clearest when faith representatives are elected by a recognised body such as an inter-faith forum or Churches Together Group. Their position is likely to be less clear if they are either elected as part of Community Empowerment Network VCS block or appointed on personal merit and become de facto faith representatives by being acknowledged as people of faith. If they lack a real mandate or authority and/or try unsuccessfully to speak for all the different faiths, their legitimacy can be undermined.

4.10 Sexual orientation

Equality South West found that sexual orientation and gender were the second most underrepresented strands after transgender, with representatives on only three out of the 10 LSPs (Equality South West and GOSW, 2008) and it seems likely that this is not atypical. It also seems to be the case that local authorities have been less likely to have equality schemes for sexual orientation than other equality strands. For some, compliance with Civil Partnership laws is as far as they have progressed.

'The Council was amongst the first to embrace the Civil Partnership laws and these ceremonies are now an integral part of our registration services. We have not been able to make contact with any established lesbian, gay and bisexual groups and so we are working with Hampshire Constabulary who has started to establish a reference group. However, we are taking steps to consider how our services may impact on people of different sexual orientation.' (Hampshire County Council website)

However, lesbian, gay and bisexual people are now being included in the single equality schemes that many authorities are preparing.

A key issue in relation to sexual orientation is the paucity of reliable data. As one interviewee said: *'If local authorities and hospitals and police forces and employers don't know who's out there, they can't be expected to get it right.'* A study commissioned by the Northwest Development Agency (Hall and Panton, 2009) found that, although the North West region has a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) population that equates roughly to the population size of Liverpool, policymakers in the region have a limited knowledge and understanding of the needs of its LGBT population. There is no evidence to suggest equity with the other equality strands, especially with regard to the level of investment in LGBT communities and voluntary organisations.

Many areas use national data as a basis for local estimates. Primary Care Trusts seem the most likely agencies to attempt to monitor certain issues in relation to lesbian, gay and bisexual people and there are data to be found in some joint strategic needs assessments. It was evident in the case studies that public agencies and others are often reluctant to monitor and, if they attempt to do, so may meet resistance. The Stonewall publication *What's it got to do with you?*, for use by local authorities and others, indicates the importance of information to help local authorities and others to know where and how to direct their services, and whether there are certain people not making the most of them. It seeks to allay fears about the information being misused or passed on to others. In Tower Hamlets, the sexual orientation equality scheme underlines that it is mandatory for all services to undertake equality monitoring across all six strands (except for under 16s) but recognises that staff can sometimes find it difficult to ask the sexual orientation monitoring question and users can sometime be offended by being asked. The Council has corporate equality monitoring guidelines for staff and a postcard that explains the reasons behind equality monitoring.

The case studies variously reflected what seems to be the wider state of play in relation to addressing sexual orientation as an equality strand:

- There is more likely to be involvement where there are active organisations and an infrastructure in which they can participate. For example, Somerset Gay Health is a member of Somerset's FEDS steering group.
- Some areas, such as Sandwell, are just starting to identify and prioritise 'new' equalities groups such as LGB.
- Councils are more likely than LSPs to address the interests of LGBT people either as employees or service users.
- There is growing awareness of the need to include sexual orientation issues in staff and elected member development. For example, in South Tyneside, a DVD about the experiences of the LGBT community living and growing up in the borough is shown as part of the Council's induction training. It was made using participatory video methods in partnership with members of the local LGBT community. The box below gives an example of another approach to training elected members.
- LGBT History month is a way for some LSPs and local authorities to give support to LGB communities.

Training elected members in Tower Hamlets

The Members' Diversity and Equality Group looked at all schemes in place and picked out the trickiest issues, which were largely ones that did not fit specific portfolios: preventing violent extremism, homophobic hate, and refugees and new communities. One approach was to develop a scenario: 200 words on a postcard describing a particular situation; for example, a young Muslim gay boy having problems at home and school. The group had to decide what the issues were for the local authority as a service provider. They had a specialist on hand to offer advice.

Since then, a similar format has been used for member development in relation to the single equality duty.

Among the case study areas, Tower Hamlets had done most work in relation to sexual orientation. This was mainly led by the borough council, which has had a strong record of working with partners to tackle sexual orientation inequality. Even while there were only duties in relation to race, gender and disability, the Council was already committed to levelling up for the other strands. At corporate level, it produced six equality schemes and the overall diversity and equality action plan identifies priority areas for work. The action plan is agreed annually by the cabinet and monitored every six months by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee along with a summary of progress on each scheme. The approach to developing the first sexual orientation scheme is shown overleaf.

Tower Hamlets sexual orientation equality scheme 2009-12

The sexual orientation scheme was based on a baseline exercise which combined:

- findings from two pieces of commissioned research, overseen by a sub-group of the LGBT Community Forum, on the needs of LGBT people in the borough and the specific needs of older LGBT people
- wider consultation with residents through street surveys, an internet survey and consultation with staff about their views and experiences of the Council as an LGB employer
- the results of an anonymous Stonewall questionnaire to all staff, and
- analysis of demographic and statistical information, existing consultation and a review of relevant EIAs.

Its London location and the diversity of its population make it unsurprising that there are a number of LGB organisations active in the borough. There has been an LGBT forum in Tower Hamlets for several years, which has recently been relaunched and is moving from mainly comprising agency representatives to community members having a stronger role (Appendix 4.12).

4.11 Minorities within minorities

In looking at economic inequality in the UK, the National Equality Panel indicated that it is too simplistic to treat equality groups as blanket categories. In terms of socio-economic inequality, there are as many variations within them as between them and the rest of the population.

'There are pervasive inequalities between social groups that manifest themselves repeatedly across the different outcomes we have examined. At the same time, the scale of inequality within each group is usually little or no smaller than it is across the population as a whole.' (National Equality Panel, 2010, p.30)

The absence of homogeneity is one of the key messages emerging from this examination of the separate equality strands. In relation to civic participation, therefore, it will always be difficult for any one person to be a spokesperson for their whole community. Conversely, individuals have multiple identities and may find it hard to know who can speak for them. For example, older ethnic minority people can experience specific disadvantages. Is the route to addressing these via organisations for older people or ethnic minority groups? Some equality groups themselves may not be adept at dealing with intersectional issues. The Women Take Part research (Bedford et al., 2008) concluded that most organisations

could do more to recognise how race and gender intersect and how gender plays out in terms of different life experiences and opportunities in relation to class, income, sexuality, physical ability or disability. Those calling for equality for women often only articulate the needs and experience of white, middle-class heterosexual women. Similarly, there are questions over the nature and effectiveness of representation and engagement within faith communities. Specific strategies may be needed to seek the views and interests of some groups such as Muslim women (Lowndes and Smith, 2006).

4.12 Equalities infrastructure

The value of equalities infrastructure is in offering a specialist perspective and a deeper understanding of discrimination and the support needed by specific communities. However, a report for the National Equality Partnership (Vergea et al., 2008) underlined that at present there is considerable regional variation and some more general challenges:

- There are gaps in information on equality sectors and support providers' needs especially for those communities belonging to multiple equalities' groups. This, with the invisibility of specific groups within broader equalities sectors, reflects the existing marginalisation of large segments of society.
- Lack of proactive involvement by government structures and organisational capacity constraints restrict policy engagement of equalities sectors at regional and local levels.
- Equalities infrastructure organisations face constant obstacles to their sustainability in the current context of commissioning and procurement.
- There is uneven development of equalities networks and partnerships at regional, sub-regional and local level.
- Access to equalities and generalist infrastructure support is limited by support providers' capacity and that of frontline groups to self-organise to seek help.

Government Office for the South East (GOSE) commissioned a report *Mapping the Culture and Mechanisms of Engagement with Equalities Representatives in the South East* (McHale and Hughes, 2010). The mapping found that engaging with local area networks is the main tool adopted by local authorities, moving beyond hearing the 'usual voices'. High levels of engagement are reported with disabled people, older and younger people and ethnic minority organisations. There is usually limited engagement with LGB communities, and transgender people are the least engaged. Engagement with religious groups is fairly limited. The case study findings do not depart markedly from these conclusions, but perhaps the most striking messages are, first, that there are wide variations both in relation to different equality strands and different places and, second, that the picture is fluid because LSPs and their partners are increasingly active in engagement. Again, however, it is frequently difficult to identify how far LSPs take advantage of these forums and mechanisms as representative structures and determine the role of LSPs in relation to them

as distinct from that of their partners. If equality groups are able to establish constructive bilateral relationships with different partner agencies, the question is raised about how far LSPs add value. This question will be addressed in Chapter 8.

TAKING THE EQUALITIES AGENDA FORWARD

5. Planning for delivery

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area (the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership) and other key partners at the local level. This chapter covers a number of aspects relating to LAAs: values, priorities, indicators, data, commissioning and equality impact assessments. However, first it should be stressed that, if organisations - whether LSPs or their partners - are to make progress on equality issues, a commitment to equality must be embedded in their own structures, policies and practices.

5.1 Commitment to equality

'Imagine Somerset in 2026: Our overall vision is of a dynamic, successful and modern economy that supports, respects and develops Somerset's distinctive communities and unique environment... The county for us represents a balance, sustainable heritage - a legacy that makes Somerset a landscape for the future. Across Somerset, there are communities and individuals who do not have the same quality of life, job prospects or life expectancy as others might. People living in rural communities can find it more difficult to gain the services they need. Endeavouring to 'narrow the gap' has emerged as really important in Somerset and features strongly in the new Sustainable Community Strategy.'
(<http://www.somersetstrategicpartnership.org.uk/>)

The previous section focused on the civic participation dimension of the research. This section looks at whether LSPs are pursuing an agenda that will result in improving equality in service provision. This chapter looks first at some of the background work done by LSPs and their partners and the consultation processes undertaken when preparing their SCSs and LAAs, then reviews how far equalities are articulated in their SCSs and other plans.

Equality invariably features in Sustainable Community Strategies, though the emphasis and terminology may vary. In some, as in Sandwell, equality priorities are closely aligned with core principles of fairness, accountability and understanding. In Tower Hamlets, the idea of *One Tower Hamlets* underpins the four themes: reducing inequalities, bringing local communities together, having strong local leadership and encouraging personal responsibility. Tackling inequalities is probably a more common theme than promoting equality. Very often this is put in terms of narrowing the gap between the most and the least well off, for instance, in relation to improving deprived neighbourhoods or policy themes such as educational attainment and health improvement.

In some SCSs, equality issues tend to be associated with specific themes. For example, Hampshire's clearest equality ambition concerns children and young people. Elsewhere, the implications of the ambitions for equalities groups are more implicit than explicit, such as those that focus on cohesive and inclusive communities, the safeguarding of vulnerable people, the reduction of inequalities in outcomes for residents, safer communities, and improving health and wellbeing. Somerset's SCS contains six aims and under each aim lists some challenges. Aim 6 is 'Staying safe' and one of the challenges is 'Mutual respect and understanding' (see box below). This illustrates awareness of, and concern about, problems such as hate crime even where there is not yet clear evidence about the nature and scope of the problem.

Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy - Challenge 15: Mutual respect and understanding

Current measures of success

- Increase the percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area (NI 1).
- Increase the perception that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration (NI 23).

Key facts

- Older people are still the main target of household burglaries but they are still less likely to be the victims of crime than other age groups.
- Almost half of those aged over 75 are too afraid to leave their homes after dark because they believe they will be verbally abused or mugged.
- Racist offences remain low in Somerset and are not targeted to any particular members of the black and ethnic minority communities. In 2007, schools reported 102 incidents of racism.
- There is not enough data to support the verbal feedback from gay, lesbian and disabled people that they are victims of hate crime.

What we will do

- 15.1 Promote mutual respect and understanding between all members of the community.
- 15.2 Address the generation gap and increase opportunities for inter-generational activities.

What will we do first?

- We will help people wherever they live to get on well together, irrespective of their age, gender or background.

Croydon's SCS has six key themes. Two have an overt focus on equalities and on cohesion: 'Safer, stronger and more sustainable communities' and 'Achieving better outcomes for children and young people'. However, other themes, such as the economic growth and health themes have clear linkages because, for example, people with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and people from ethnic minority groups have poorer health outcomes.

A recurrent theme in many SCSs is that of community cohesion. In Bolton, the focus on equalities is increasingly tied up in wider partnership working over community cohesion. Bolton Council rightfully claims to be one of the first local authorities to recognise the importance of building cohesion between its many diverse communities before and after the race-related disturbances in northern towns in the summer of 2001. It has expressed the desire to establish itself as an exemplar of community cohesion. The LSP has played a leading role in this. In 2003, the Bolton Vision steering group published a Community Cohesion Charter in which the '*vision is that everyone in the Borough will be able to live peacefully and in harmony with their neighbours and in their communities*' (Bolton Vision 2005, p.120). Following further consultation with partners, Bolton Vision created a race equality strategy as the first strand in a process to develop its broader diversity strategy, which was finalised in mid-2007. The 'story of place' in Bolton's LAA emphasises the significance of the borough's diversity and the importance attached to cohesion.

In other areas, central government emphasis in the past has given more weight to the cohesion and the Prevent agendas. Now abolished, the Prevent strategy aimed to challenge the ideology behind violent extremism, support individuals who are vulnerable to becoming extremists, increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism and address the grievances that could give rise to extremism.

It has already become apparent through this report that there are various ways in which local authorities can demonstrate a commitment to equality: in their employment practices, through their staff and member training and development, in their equality schemes and through their support of networks and forums. Other partners also have equality schemes and develop structures that can help them fulfil their equality aspirations. Within LSPs, particular sub-partnerships may have responsibility for advancing the equalities agenda. For example, Bolton NHS has set up equality target action groups (Appendix 5.1).

5.2 LAA priorities

'The new Plan and the LAA are overarching strategies and designed to consider and meet the needs of Tower Hamlets' diverse and vibrant communities as a whole. It seeks to do this by:

- *Promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination in the planning and delivery of services in terms of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, health and income status.*
- *Promoting good relations between communities, and addressing negative stereotyping of any groups.*
- *Ensuring all residents have equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process.*
- *Tackling harassment relating to a person's age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, health and income status.'*

(Tower Hamlets Equality Impact Assessment – Community Plan 2020 and the Local Area Agreement, p.29)

LAAs are three-year delivery plans based upon the vision, principles and themes contained in SCSs. Reflecting priorities is particularly difficult in two-tier areas where the county-level LAA has to provide an overarching focus for county-wide targets and service delivery at the same time as taking account of district SCSs. In some places, the SCS was refreshed concurrently with the development of the LAA, which meant that consultation on both documents happened at the same time. In any case, wider community consultation around LAAs focused on broad priorities rather than getting down to the detail of selecting indicators. LAAs may or may not contain explicit mention of equalities, though the agreements will usually be subject to an equality impact assessment.

Equality South West researched the extent to which effective consultation had taken place around equality and diversity in developing LAAs (Equality South West, 2008). The Bristol Partnership, for example, had held an LAA event specifically for equalities groups and organisations. Gloucestershire LSP included a local target in the LAA on the number of councils achieving level 3 of the local government equality standard. The Isles of Scilly LAA emphasises equitable access to services, recognising the isolation that can be caused by the geography of the islands.

5.3 Targets and indicators

LAAs include indicators taken from the National Indicator Set as the basis of the local agreement with central government, plus some local indicators that may be NIs or indicators designed locally. In relation to the equalities agenda, not only was the choice of NIs important but also how they can be broken down into equality strands and the extent to which they can be monitored by equality groups.

Selecting indicators for LAAs entailed considerable negotiation, not only across partners but also between the LSP and Government Office. Views varied between interviewees in the case studies about how well the indicators eventually chosen actually reflected the story of

place and about the balance between GO and local influence in the process. For example, it was said in one area that the GO had written a letter about their understanding of the locality and what should go into the LAA, but it was felt locally that this was a less than adequate understanding of the area that did not fully capture the challenges. There was 90 per cent agreement about the LAA from the beginning but disagreement about 10 per cent. The GO wanted a focus on underperformance whereas the LSP wanted to go with their priorities.

In all the case studies, most of the targets in LAAs are general and inclusive, structured around priority themes, with just a few that explicitly relate to specific equality groups. For example, Bolton includes:

- Improvements in mortality rates differentiated by gender.
- Under-18 teenage conception rates.
- Attainment rates (at Key Stage 4) differentiated by ethnicity with the 2009/10 target also specifying Gypsy/Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage (who were not included in the previous 2007/8 and 2008/9 targets).
- First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17.
- Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.

In Hull, the LAA does not consider equalities groups specifically (though there are indicators around inclusion that should impact on the equality agenda – for example around narrowing the gap on attainment) nor are there targets relating to inequalities in different geographical parts of the city. A number of indicators refer to children and young people: children in care, young offenders, participation in sport, educational attainment, attendance and bullying. The indicator for young offenders is reducing those ‘not in education, employment or training’ (NEET) as this was preferred to re-offending rates. ‘Participation in sport’ is seen as an intermediate indicator selected for its potential to impact on obesity. Bullying was an issue highlighted by the Youth Parliament and other young people during consultation exercises, including the TellUs survey, so it appeared in the LAA directly as a result of young people’s voices being heard. There are no LAA targets selected specifically for the over 50s or over 60s though targets such as the Decent Homes Standards and Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) ratings (energy efficiency of homes) are important for older people, as well as place-based indicators such as neighbourhood clean-up that can have a positive effect on older people’s quality of life. In Hull, the equalities strategy is designed to plug the gaps that the LAA and other mainstream strategies may not cover.

Leicester as a more diverse city does include NI 1. Its Stronger Communities Partnership is responsible for managing NI 1 (percentage of people who believe people from different

backgrounds get on well together in their local area) and two other indicators, NI 5 (satisfaction with local services) and NI 140 (fair treatment by local services). There are delivery plans for each of these.

Somerset also includes NI 1 in the LAA and in a Delivery Plan produced in April 2010 addressing the following issues:

- Raising awareness among the whole community of Somerset of the benefits of a cohesive and equal society.
- Reducing potential tensions and increased pressure on services due to inward migration.
- Reducing potential tensions due to increase in site provision for Gypsies and Travellers.
- Embedding within schools community cohesion issues relating to young people and education.
- Achieving inter-generational understanding between young and older individuals, groups and communities.
- Understanding the impact of hate crime and where it has a negative effect on community cohesion.
- Achieving a better understanding among partners of community cohesion and the factors that impact on it, such as deprivation and rural isolation.
- Strengthening the VCS through support and help accessing/applying for funding.
- Supporting the Forum for Equality and Diversity in Somerset and all the strand groups represented on it.

Somerset is also seeking to identify indicators for the 10 dimensions of equality:

Somerset – indicators for the 10 dimensions of equality

Somerset aims to identify indicators for the 10 dimensions of equality, looking particularly at how far it can cross-tabulate and understand overlays. This will make connections to other Partnership Intelligence Unit (PIU) work – including the production of the Somerset ‘quilt’, which will show, on one side of A4, 30 measures by 40 areas allowing identification of ‘hot spots’ in relation to problems and performance. Equalities issues will be implied not explained at this level, but the information will be of value to the kind of cross-tabulation they intend in the 10 dimensions work. The ‘quilt’ will show things like the age of the population, the state of the housing stock and levels of deprivation from which you can draw inferences, but the 10 dimensions work will be more detailed and explanatory.

On physical security for example, there will be perhaps four measures of how safe people feel. The place survey data indicates that feeling unsafe after dark correlates highly with

acquisitive crime. Currently, although using a lot of the same measures, the links are not made so that it is not possible to answer questions such as 'Are women more likely to be fearful after dark?' For the 10 dimensions, however, chosen indicators and performance on those indicators will be examined in relation to particular equality strands. This cross-tabulation will allow drilling down into more detail about people and outcomes.

It will be necessary to agree on good indicators – for example, addressing problems that arise at a very local level and therefore affect very low numbers. The place survey might have some value here because how people feel is important, but it has the drawback of only being a sample and it is particularly problematic in relation to rural areas, because it focuses on things you can walk to in 15-20 minutes.

In Croydon, some priorities identified under each theme have an explicit equalities dimension. For example, under 'safer, stronger and more sustainable communities', priorities include: 'promoting community cohesion, a sense of community and community engagement' and 'tackling inequality of opportunity and promoting social mobility'. While some indicators are specific to particular groups, on the whole consideration of equalities groups is undertaken in the supporting strategies, including the Children and Young People's Plan and the Older People's Strategy.

Tower Hamlets focuses on addressing inequality by seeking to understand issues and identifying where and why inequalities exist so that resources can be provided to address them efficiently. This led to the inclusion of some indicators that might not otherwise have been included. For example, under the reducing worklessness priority, the indicators include specific mention of adults with learning difficulties (NI 146) and adults in contact with secondary mental health services (NI 150) in employment. Some other work around targets such as looking at perception figures or NEETs had an equality focus, including LGB. As it is impossible to reflect all communities of interest in the LAA, some issues have to be pursued outside it.

These examples from the case studies illustrate the different approaches adopted by LSPs to determining which indicators to select and some of the criteria on which their choices were made. It is evident in all of them, first, that 'equality' was only one criterion and that it had to take its place alongside others, such as underperformance. The LAA is not the only means of addressing equality issues, but it is unclear how far LSPs explicitly considered which challenges were best tackled within the LAA and which were not. Secondly, there is likely to be only a partial understanding of 'equality' in relation to specific challenges such as attainment rates. Thirdly, the extent and pattern of diversity across the area also influences the level of awareness of equality issues.

There was concern from some stakeholders that the national targets have driven out local equality targets. An exception given as an example of good practice was Worcestershire, where the LAA included a locally agreed target on pensioner poverty.

5.4 Issues relating to national indicators

The case studies raised a number of issues about indicators:

- It can be difficult to consult meaningfully on them, especially as there are technical issues. Sometimes even when a particular national indicator seemed appropriate, the subsequently published definition showed it to be unsuitable.
- Where indicators are not specific to a particular group, there is seldom any discussion of how outcomes for different equalities groups will be measured and monitored.
- There are gaps. For example, no national indicator has a specific outcome for LGB groups or monitors LGB outcomes and there is no indicator on pensioner poverty.
- The National Indicator Set is not formally disaggregated and measures are difficult to disaggregate.
- The LAA has had a positive role in focusing attention on priorities, but specific targets and indicators can have perverse effects. They can distort equalities issues because, in the words of an interviewee, they can encourage agencies to '*reach for the lowest hanging fruit*'. In other words, they may lead to preoccupation with targets that can be more easily attained to the neglect of those that are more challenging.
- There was a view that targets need to be seen only in the context of recognising that equalities is about changing relationships and behaviours. LSPs can be very valuable in helping to produce the partnership that is required to tackle deep-rooted equalities issues, which cannot be resolved by one agency acting alone. One interviewee echoed the views of others in saying that this is more important than '*just having the right indicators in the LAA*'.
- There are differences of view about whether LAAs ought to focus on the biggest priorities for the area as a whole. These by definition may not be the same as issues affecting minority groups.

Together, these issues cast doubt on how appropriate the National Indicator Set is for the equalities agenda and underline the importance of adopting other routes to pursuing the agenda.

5.5 Data

'Partners don't yet have systems to assess and report on the impact of their services or whether they are meeting different people's needs.' (Interviewee)

A recent study by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Fry et al., 2009) of 11 different locally based public sector organisations investigated what statistical data they collect and use relating to equality, diversity and human rights and the uses to which the data are put. The research found a range of motivations and rationales and wide range of activities. In looking at the way data were used in each of the six major dimensions of equality and in the area of human rights, it showed:

- Most work on age focused on older people and children/young people.
- The focus on disability included analysis regarding the situation of disabled staff as well as users.
- Most organisations used gender-disaggregated statistics for workforce.
- Many were trying to address race and ethnicity and religion or belief, but there were very limited data available on the latter. The Census, as the main source, was now out of date. Profiling exercises, for example by PCTs, sometimes suffered from poor response rates and small samples.
- Very few organisations had made any progress with regard to sexual orientation or transgender. There was a widespread view that data were very limited and difficult to obtain because of data protection/disclosure. A few organisations were working with relevant voluntary organisations to address this.
- Human rights were poorly understood in most case studies and there was a general lack of certainty about whether issues could be captured in statistical evidence. Some felt human rights issues were being addressed in work with refugees, asylum seekers and some ethnic minority groups as well as through engagement with faith networks and trade unions.

All the public sector organisations surveyed in the Commission study offered some form of training and awareness raising to staff on equality and diversity, sometimes involving use of statistical sources; some were also doing work to promote equality and diversity with external partners. However, the study found that organisational arrangements for equality and diversity issues and the resources invested varied widely not only between organisations but between departments within them.

The policy implications of the study included the need to:

- Encourage organisations to seek statistical bases more effectively, with support from national organisations where appropriate.
- Make more support available to local public sector organisations to identify, use and interpret statistics.

- Develop new approaches and guidance for obtaining ‘sensitive data’ (for example, on sexual orientation or transgender status) and on data where disclosure can be difficult (disability, religion, etc).
- Encourage organisations to become exemplar employers in their use of statistics and consider appointing staff with statistical analysis and interpretation skills dedicated to equality and diversity work.

The findings of the current research, although not focusing significantly on data, often echo those of the Fry report:

- Employment diversity monitoring is usual in statutory organisations, though this frequently does not include questions on sexual orientation.
- Sometimes CVSs and other voluntary sector organisations have been supported to carry out diversity audits.
- There is an increasing focus on obtaining information relevant to the story of place, but also scope for greater support and guidance for local organisations.
- For some dimensions of some equality strands, there is often plenty of data, especially administrative data, but people do not necessarily know how to use it.

Very often the preparation of SCSs and LAAs points to gaps in data and the lack of baselines. For example, following the SCS, further research was undertaken in Hampshire to establish baseline data with specific relevance to equalities:

- Age differentials – the increase in older people and decrease in younger people.
- Race – the increase in migrant workers, and the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment.
- Faith – more visible faith groups highlighted by work on the Interfaith Network.
- Health issues for older people from ethnic minority groups and people with learning difficulties.

Perception indicators form part of many LAAs. The Place Survey, although only a sample survey, has enabled some of these to be tracked. However, the results need to be interpreted with care and it is not necessarily appropriate to make direct comparison between different areas. For example, a recent study (Newton et al., 2010) looked at factors affecting NI 4 scores (the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality) and found that feelings of influence are strongly related to the background characteristics of an area: levels of ethnicity and in-migration; region; and whether or not an area is urban.

The Place Survey

The Place Survey, a biennial postal survey first run in 2008, collects information on people's perceptions of their local area (15-20 minutes walking distance from the respondent's home) and the work of their local authorities and partners. It is a very large survey, with over 543,000 people aged 18 or older across 329 local authorities in England responding in 2008. Local authorities are responsible for running the survey in their own area, using a standardised methodology, questionnaire and manual provided by CLG. The survey supplies data which currently inform 18 national indicators, across a number of government departments. These measure how well the government's priorities, as set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review, are being delivered by local government. They form an important part of the streamlined local performance framework and contribute to the shift in focus away from customer satisfaction with services provided by local authorities to seeking residents' views on what it is like to live in an area. Data also help to monitor several Public Service Agreement indicators. The current government has cancelled the 2010 survey and the future of the survey at the time of writing this report is unclear.

The two boxes below give examples of partnership working on data and, in other LSPs, partners also have data sharing arrangements and protocols. In Sandwell, there is a joint strategic intelligence group that the LSP can access. As well as the joint strategic needs assessment, there have been specific ones including an assessment of child poverty. The team produces a regular State of Sandwell Report and disaggregates data around target groups. The LSP is trying to ensure that data reflects changes such as new communities and that it is focused on understanding outcomes.

Somerset Partnership Intelligence Unit

The main funders of the newly launched Somerset Partnership Intelligence Unit (PIU) are the police, health and the county council plus the fire service. The manager of the PIU has been in post since June 2009 and her team since September 2009. The districts do not provide any funding but there are good working relationships. The county council provides more than 50 per cent of the funding. The unit has a corporate role, coordinating county information functions, but its key role is to meet the information needs of partnerships. The PIU has brought a more coordinated approach to developing equalities data and made it easier to draw out equalities issues and use them to inform things like the health and social inequality strategy and work on the 10 dimensions. The PIU's work has also included community safety assessments and is addressing the issue of hate crime. Historically there has been more awareness and recording of race hate than homophobic hate crime or hate crime relating to people with disabilities. Work on this has identified the need for a protocol for improved recording of information.

Croydon Observatory

Croydon Observatory provides a common and shared dataset for all LSP partners. The website is intended to be a one-stop shop for information about the borough and its communities and is designed for people who are actively engaged in service planning and improvement in the borough. It also gives links to other sources of information and analysis on Croydon. Initially the information has been structured under the themes of the Local Area Agreement.

In Hampshire, elected members both receive and contribute to information bases. Designated Hampshire Action Teams support them in reaching out to diverse communities and provide them with detailed community profiles including available equality mapping data. They are then able to feedback community intelligence to the Council's equality champions and manager.

'Elected members are the key to communities. They should be the funnel for intelligence with members working locally and addressing local issues and filtering that intelligence back.' (Interviewee)

5.6 Commissioning

The issue of commissioning can be looked at in different ways in relation to equalities: how far equality groups are involved in commissioning services; the issue of commissioning services from third-sector organisations; and the extent to which services commissioned are tailored to equality group needs.

LSPs themselves are not commissioning bodies in relation to mainstream budgets and, therefore, commissioning rests with partners and especially the local authority. As an interviewee in one area said: *'The LSP doesn't really commission. An exception was the allocation of NRF and later Working Neighbourhoods Funds although even here the thematic partnerships were more active.'*

Sometimes partnership sub-groups have commissioning budgets and, where equalities groups are involved in commissioning, it is largely through their membership of and representation on partnership sub-groups. The box overleaf gives an example of other routes to involvement for young people in Hull. Also in Hull, the local authority is in the process of establishing a customer base group for older people's services as part of the move towards self-directed support. It has service level agreements with Age UK and some community organisations aimed at specific areas including older people, for example, the Community Care Organisation, whose members are mainly 55 years and over. These groups are also engaged in Service Planning Groups. There are also plans for the PCT

to involve older people in commissioning, and the PCT often makes use of the LINK, a health and social care forum involving older people as well as others. More services are being commissioned from the third sector such as Age UK because of the legislative focus on this agenda from national government. Usually this has been through direct contact with commissioners rather than via the LSP because the LSP's commissioning responsibilities are mainly confined to the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and Migration Impact Fund.

Young people's involvement in commissioning in Hull

The assistant director for commissioning in the local authority Children's Services department is also the lead on children's voice and influence, so works to integrate young people's views into the commissioning process. Examples of projects commissioned in direct response to feedback from young people include an inclusive bicycle scheme for disabled children and Changing Places disabled toilets. Young people are often involved in the tender panels for commissioning, where this is felt to be appropriate, for example on the summer play activities tender, staff recruitment and BSF. There is a standing forum of young people who agree to be consulted on tenders though other groups of young people are also assembled on an ad hoc basis depending on who the client base for a contract will be (for example, disabled young people).

The procedures around commissioning will largely rest on those of the statutory agencies involved. For example, in Croydon, the Council's commissioning framework requires all bidders to consider and identify the impacts of their projects on equalities issues.

Another means of involvement in making decisions on services is participatory budgeting, which entails local people selecting their priorities for using specific pots of money. Most areas allocated relatively small-scale budgets ranging from £30-100k a year. The main exception was Tower Hamlets (see box below), which allocated £2.4 million of funding between its eight Local Area Partnerships and therefore facilitated a large-scale participatory budgeting programme. This funding was sourced from the council's general fund, that is, money set aside from the council budget before it had been allocated to a specific department.

Participatory budgeting: *You Decide!*

Tower Hamlets actively sought to ensure its decision-making events were attended by a representative group of the population. Communication techniques included posters, banners, press adverts, articles in the council newspaper (which is circulated to all homes across the authority), radio adverts, TV adverts (on Bengali TV stations) and leaflets, as well as through word of mouth, councillor contacts in their wards, local social networks and

community groups, mosques, churches and so on. In 2009, over 800 residents gathered in community venues across the borough and invested in over 90 separate initiatives. A series of questions was asked as part of the warm-up for voting regarding gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith and disability, so that the team could target those groups that were underrepresented.

There was a menu of costed options set out in a You Decide! brochure. Service providers include third-sector organisations. Each Local Area Partnership (LAP) had a share of the budget (£120,000 per ward plus £17,500 for additional health services making at least £275,000 per LAP) and public meetings were held to decide on spend. People had voting pads for casting their votes. Once the decisions are made, the LAP steering groups get involved in:

- deciding how a service should be provided in the local area
- monitoring services, and
- ensuring that delivery matches up with expectations of the residents who voted for the service.

Even where groups are not yet significantly involved in service delivery or commissioning, this was seen as a desirable long-term objective: *'not necessarily because they are equality groups but because we want to increase the involvement of community groups in partnership development'* (interviewee).

Some areas are working to improve their practices in relation to commissioning. In Hull, the LSP runs training programmes for partners on commissioning to help align approaches and understanding across the partnership. Some are focusing on the needs of equality groups. The Somerset Community Cohesion delivery plan includes a 'voice and influence' project which partly taps into Empowering Communities funding and offers training relating to services, commissioning and programme development for individuals from particular groups (ethnic minorities, young people, people with disabilities, but not gender-based groups).

In contracting with third-sector organisations, consistency is needed in the communication of opportunities, commissioning processes and policies (for example, regarding full cost recovery) and monitoring arrangements. There are different ways of supporting this, for example through:

- dedicated third-sector provider day
- new procurement toolkit for staff, review of code of practice and mandatory training for staff undertaking commissioning from third sector organisations
- speeding up payments processes, and

- examining third-sector spend to improve value for money and service delivery.

A number of recent policy directions have implications for commissioning. For example, Total Place⁶ puts considerable emphasis on strategic and 'joined-up' commissioning. Personalisation in the social care agenda stresses choice and control by service users and increases the need for advocacy and support brokerage. These and other developments will need to be monitored for their impact on equality groups. *'Equalities are not necessarily resource hungry; it's more about the way you think – proper analysis and personalisation, which entails putting in place protective measures in commissioning to get culturally tailored services.'*

5.7 Equality impact assessments

'...EIAs are a process of systematically exploring the potential for a policy or function to have an unequal impact on a particular group or community. This includes the impact... on employees, existing and potential service users, the wider community and where relevant, staff employed in contracted-out services. Impact assessments in Tower Hamlets consider the potential for the policy or function to have an unequal impact or detriment on any group likely to face disadvantage. This includes groups defined by their ethnicity, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation and age.' (from Tower Hamlets equality impact assessment guidance and template updates for 2003/04, p.5)

There is a requirement to undertake equality impact assessments (EIAs) on Local Area Agreements and Sustainable Community Strategies as part of the legislative duties placed upon all public bodies. The government's 'empowerment and engagement agenda' reinforced this in pressing statutory bodies to deliver and promote accessible services, encourage participation and involvement, listen and engage (particularly with 'those who are hard to hear') and base services around the needs of the resident or user (see for example, the statutory guidance for *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities*, 2008). EIAs relating to LSPs and LAA policies, therefore, are increasingly common but policies vary in different localities and different organisations.

The equalities approach by the County Council and the LSP in Essex is underpinned by a firm commitment to EIAs. These have been associated with a comprehensive training programme across all partner agencies. In Essex, the decision was taken to do EIAs only

⁶ Total Place is a new initiative that looks at how a 'whole area' approach to public services can lead to better services at less cost. It seeks to identify and avoid overlap and duplication between organisations – delivering a step change in both service improvement and efficiency at the local level, as well as across Whitehall. From April 2011, the plan is for local authorities with 'a strong track record' of efficient working to be able to negotiate with central government for more freedoms under a 'single offer'.

for all the action plans for the thematic partnerships. Individual partners were responsible for EIAs for their own plans. There is also determination to shift from process to outcomes when impacts become more evident. Two extra strands were also added: 'economic deprivation' and 'rural isolation', which addressed the very wide economic and geographic diversity in the county and identified issues not included in the other six strands. In Bolton, the Council tries to take a balanced approach and focus at the level of frontline services where, as an interviewee put it, '*services touch communities most closely*'.

Tower Hamlets council started a rolling programme of EIAs in 2002 with the current three year programme due to finish at the end of March 2011. The work programme involves the production of 104 EIAs – either screening reports or full assessments of services and policies. They cover all six equality strands and must be undertaken as a matter of course for all new policies or functions before introduction and also, subsequently, for all those identified through the 'test of relevance' as having a high relevance. There have been four strategic level EIAs, one of which was of the governance of the Tower Hamlets Partnership. Staff from the LSP have been trained to give mentoring support to people conducting impact assessments. Their delivery has been variable and, because of this and the need to incorporate them into future arrangements arising from the Equality Act, there is to be a programme review. The aim is to develop a system more responsive to the needs of directorates and increase its relevance to operational delivery, making it evident that equality issues have been incorporated at the heart of business/service delivery. Tower Hamlets Council is also now trying to bring EIAs into areas where they are less developed, such as sustainability or carbon emissions. Currently they have probably been done where hearts and minds were already won – the aim is now to widen out to other policy areas.

Tower Hamlets carried out an EIA on its Community Plan 2020 and the LAA. Section 1 looks at the aims and implementation of the policy and includes sections on the rationale behind the policy and its delivery. It asks who is affected by the policy and who is intended to benefit from it and how. It asks about the promotion of good relations between different communities: whether it contributes to better community cohesion. Section 2 considers data and research: profiles of users or beneficiaries; profiles of staff (in the council); evidence of complaints against services on the grounds of discrimination; and potential or known personal, institutional, economic or cultural barriers to participation for different equality target groups. It identifies where more data are required. Section 3 assesses any disproportionate or adverse impact in relation to each equality strand and identifies other groups that might be adversely affected, such as those in poverty. Section 4 sets out measures to mitigate disproportionate or adverse impact and section 5 covers conclusions and recommendations. The overall conclusion was that the Community Plan and LAA as high-level strategic documents were likely to have a positive effect on people from all different backgrounds. Further work to disaggregate performance indicators according to

equality strands was already underway. A strategy mapping exercise was proposed to ensure that the strategies and plans sitting under the Community Plan were also subject to EIAs.

Although the questions are arguably ones *'that they should be asking themselves'*, as one interviewee commented, there is a danger of the EIA process becoming a tick box exercise. Such a criticism was made by an interviewee about some EIA training: *'the workshops were concerned with process not strategic understanding of the goals and vision'* and *'people don't have enough knowledge of the positive benefits of equalities'*.

The review process in Tower Hamlets is intended to help reframe EIAs so that they are seen in the light of a fairness issue for public services ensuring the needs of residents and customers are met. Nottingham has also been revisiting its approach to EIAs because they found it unnecessarily bureaucratic and hindered by the large number of LAA targets (Appendix 5.2). They had learnt from experience elsewhere the importance of:

- getting partnership-based decisions
- bringing together a good mix of practitioners, not just specialists, to improve the prospects of embedding equality issues in delivery
- focusing on a small number of main priorities
- agreeing a straightforward and streamlined approach and making best use of all available information, and
- putting in place a process for monitoring progress and reviewing priorities.

An innovative pilot project between Somerset County Council and the Somerset Strategic Partnership has led to the development of a Local Area Agreement and sustainable community strategy impact assessment toolkit, which is enabling best practice to be shared throughout the South West (Appendix 5.3).

5.8 Preparing for delivery

This chapter has looked at various dimensions of preparation for delivery of LAAs. It has shown that a commitment to equality invariably features in SCSs, though it is more often seen in the socio-economic terms of narrowing the gap between groups or neighbourhoods than directly addressing equality strands. This is no necessary contradiction here: some see an anti-poverty strategy as the best route to achieving more equal outcomes. However, for people within some equality groups, this may be seen as an avoidance strategy.

It has been evident that in the absence of many direct equality indicators in the NIS, LSPs on the whole struggle to demonstrate an equality agenda through their selection of indicators. There were also other pressures on them when reaching an agreement about

their priorities with government. Other criteria for selecting indicators included underperformance, selecting targets that are more readily attainable and focusing on widely supported issues. Data are a relevant factor. Although there is often an abundance of data, it is not necessarily sufficiently disaggregated to highlight the position of equality groups. In addition, there are issues around the timely sharing of data and their use as intelligence to inform policies.

The study provided some evidence on commissioning, but this is an area where further research would be valuable particularly during a period of greater joint commissioning, pooling of budgets and public sector funding constraints.

EIAs are increasingly carried out in relation to governance structures, strategies and policy implementation, but evidence in a number of places suggests that EIAs can be viewed as a requirement for compliance rather than more positively as an aid to performance.

The next chapter moves to the ways in which an equalities agenda is being implemented through LSPs and LAAs.

6. Implementation and outcomes

This chapter looks at how equalities work is championed and resourced, examples of projects and, insofar as there is yet evidence, the outcomes. LSPs themselves are not delivery bodies and therefore inevitably, much of the discussion focuses on the work of LSP partners.

6.1 Championing the work

The case studies have made it very clear that individuals are important for advancing work on equalities. Interviewees stressed that leadership is vital: *'The Council's leadership team and some members talk about equalities all the time.'* *'Having champions for each equality strand constantly banging on about it is very important.'* There are sometimes designated equalities champions, though more often in local authorities or partner agencies such as PCTs than in LSPs. In councils, these may be elected members and/or officers. Political as well as officer championing is important. In at least two of the case studies, the deputy leader of the council had this role. One of these is Hampshire, where at officer level, a cross-departmental equality group drives the equalities agenda supported by the Council's equalities and diversity manager and a number of other equality specialists across departments. Each Council department has an equalities group. In addition, the VCS is given support to play a championing role.

Dedicated officer posts are most likely to be within local authorities. For example, in Tower Hamlets, there is a head of scrutiny and equalities with a team of equalities coordinators who each have responsibility for two equality strands. In Leicester, all departments in the Council have equalities officers.

Policing with the LGB and transgender communities – Hampshire Constabulary's Lesbian and Gay Liaison Officers (LAGLOs)

LAGLOs are a mix of police officers and police staff members who have special understanding and training on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues. Their role includes enhancing the relationship between the police and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in an effort to boost people's trust and confidence in coming forward to report hate crime incidents. They also work to develop ways in which the constabulary can improve its service delivery. Set up in 1996, there are over 140 LAGLOs, located at all the main police stations in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. LAGLOs are available to provide advice to their colleagues about crime investigations and to people who identify as LGBT. They visit gay-friendly venues frequently to help foster good relations with the community and listen to local concerns.

Another way of working on equalities issues and maintaining contact with different equalities communities is through liaison officers. For example, police forces such as the Metropolitan Police and Hampshire Constabulary (above) had LGBT liaison officers. Bolton Council has a Gypsies and Travellers liaison officer and there is a policy of taking newly elected executive members to the Gypsies and Travellers site as part of their induction.

Less often there are structural arrangements within LSPs for championing equalities. For example, in the Leicester Partnership, as well as in the Stronger Communities Partnership which drives the integration of equality and diversity issues throughout the LSP, delivery groups are responsible for integrating equality and diversity issues. Members of the equality and diversity partnership are also invited to attend delivery groups to provide specialist advice. In Somerset, the purpose of the Community Cohesion Forum is to champion and promote cohesion. Sandwell LSP has had a high-level equalities sub group chaired by the Council's chief executive meeting quarterly. In Hampshire, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Equality Network has supported officers from councils and other public bodies by bringing them together regularly to share information and good practice. The officers in the Network link with their individual LSPs.

How well any of these arrangements work depends considerably on the energy and knowledge of the individuals in the role and whether or not they encompass all six equality strands.

6.2 Project examples

The case studies found innumerable projects focused on or affecting equality groups. The following are a few examples. However, it was notable that on the whole, although these were projects known to the LSP, they were often commissioned or sponsored by partner agencies such as councils or PCTs rather than the LSP itself.

- A large local supplier of Asian foods has worked with the LSP and health bodies to promote healthy eating in the South Asian community in Sandwell.
- Essex has established village agents in nearly 50 rural areas to provide assistance to isolated and vulnerable groups in relation to welfare benefits, transport, access to services, health and home safety.
- Tower Hamlets negotiated a reduced fee at a private fitness centre during off-peak times. Bengali women were not previously using community fitness centres. Older women from this community took up the opportunity, and many said that it was liberating and they felt more confident and healthy as a result.
- Croydon has the first Family Justice Centre in Europe based on a US model. It operates as a one-stop shop for victims of domestic violence so that they do not have to repeat their story to each agency.

- NHS Croydon and Mind have run a Boxercise programme for mental health service users. They then developed a buddying scheme, whereby participants mentor other service users in health activities.
- Age UK has recently opened a Healthy Living Centre for older people in Hull, the first of its kind in the country. It focuses on preventative and positive interventions: home support, information and advice for older people, a gym, hydrotherapy, a sports hall, and activities such as dancing and yoga classes.
- Taxi drivers in Essex get special training to help taxi users with disabilities.
- Churches Together in South Tyneside in partnership with the Council's Adult Social Care team offers a befriending service to socially isolated people in their own homes. Volunteer befrienders for the Happy at Home project are mainly older women.
- The LinkAge Plus Pilot in Tower Hamlets addresses older people's needs and engages with them in the most appropriate way. Over 30 agencies work together in a model of collaborative service delivery, providing a single point of access to services for older people. Five LinkAge Plus Network Hubs act as social and resource centres around the borough, providing services for older people and support for smaller third-sector service providers. It is seen as an innovative approach towards engagement and preventative work that has lowered health and social care needs by encouraging healthy, fulfilling and active lifestyles among older people.

The case studies also found examples of more substantial pieces of work in relation to equality groups that often tend to be neglected. The Traveller Education Service in Bolton (Appendix 6.1) exemplifies a comprehensive and responsive approach to the educational needs of the town's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

In Tower Hamlets, there are a number of elements to the fight against hate crime. There is determination in the Partnership to make Tower Hamlets No Place for Hate (Appendix 6.2). Following a particularly serious attack on a gay man, there has been a focus on homophobic crime. A multi-agency sub-group of the No Place for Hate Forum was set up. There was community consultation. In addition, a Victim Support homophobic and transphobic crime worker was commissioned to give specialist support to victims of LGBT crime and same sex domestic violence.

Some projects are driven by national government initiatives and the opportunity to secure funding. In Bolton, a raft of projects (Appendix 6.3) feature under the government Prevent programme, which aims to stop people becoming, or supporting, violent extremists. One of the challenges is to ensure that an initiative that could potentially be seen as negative and disparaging towards some sections of the population can be implemented in a way that promotes rather than undermines integration.

Examples have already been given of projects that have a cross-cutting focus, such as Muslim women or Gypsy and Traveller young people. Opening Doors (Appendix 6.4) is an Age UK project addressing the needs of older LGBT people. Like the work of Chrysalis with transgender people, this is an example of the need to bring people together across a number of local authority areas in order to have the critical mass to function effectively. This, together with the relative invisibility of the LGBT equality group because of the lack of data, can make it more difficult for such projects to get funding and 'ownership' from specific area.

6.3 Outcomes

Over the last 12 years, relations between central government and local partnerships evolved, but were based around the use of indicators, targets and incentives. This culminated in the introduction of LAAs, which set out a limited number of targets that local partners and central government agreed were local priorities. Some of these targets related directly to equalities issues. Others, such as education targets, indirectly affected equalities. However, research into the impact of LAAs has yet to report on the effectiveness of targets in ensuring progress, relative to broad statements of shared goals that were not subject to targets and performance management. This means that, even though it was explored via the case studies, it has proved difficult to give a definitive answer on this issue.

In the 2008 LSP Survey (Russell et al., 2009), over three quarters of respondents reported progress on narrowing the gap between the most and least deprived in the community. The critical question is how far is this attributable to LSPs and LAAs? In one case study, when asked if the LSP and LAA had made any difference to equality groups, there was a mixed response. Some argued that the LAA *'gives presence and profile to certain areas of business'* that impact on equalities groups. One felt that the LAA was *'more visible to equalities groups than general mainstream delivery'*. But the general feeling was that the LAA has not made as much direct difference as the statutory duties on public bodies.

Hull exemplifies both the difficulties of ascertaining and attributing outcomes but also the challenges of prioritisation for LSPs. It is not clear from the evidence that a difference has been made to outcomes for older people during this period. The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) published in December 2009 raised a red flag on 'earning': working to ensure that all local people thrive economically. It found that projects to address worklessness are focused on the young and short-term unemployed. There is a lack of help for the long-term unemployed, those out of work through poor health and, it seemed to suggest, for the older unemployed. However, the Partnership believes that while it does have an effective strategy for reducing Incapacity Benefit claimants, a strategic decision was taken to prioritise workless young people and the newly unemployed. This was based on an assessment of the high long-term costs associated with youth worklessness.

By contrast, the CAA said that prospects for nearly all children in Hull are improving, based on the results on educational attainment, attendance and teenage pregnancy. This is described by interviewees as a result of a very strong commitment to improving life chances for children and families on the part of partners. Improving quality of teaching has been a big part of it but so have wider regeneration efforts – access to PCs in homes with children, neighbourhood improvements, health and wellbeing, housing and work outside the schools. NEET (young people not in education, employment or training) levels have fallen, following targeted and joined-up interventions by partners to raise aspirations and encourage employers to take on young people. This is an impressive achievement against the city's past trends and the direction of the national trend during recession.

New approaches are being taken to improve re-offending rates, especially for young offenders, and activities are being run for young people to provide a diversion from anti-social behaviour. The gap in educational attainment has also narrowed, and the performance of children who receive free school meals has improved. However ethnic minority children are underperforming compared with others.

The role of the LAA in improving these outcomes was debated with various consultees in the Hull case study. Many young people felt that the concerted efforts through the Children's Trust – a Strategic Delivery Partnership of the LSP which also has statutory powers – had significantly contributed to the improved results on attainments and NEET levels. The latter were also specific targets included in the LAA. The Children's Trust had put in place a holistic framework of support for children at GCSE level, investing in mentoring and healthy eating, by providing bananas during exams and postcards of support from the Partnership.

The Hull example typifies experience elsewhere in a number of ways: the difficulty of distinguishing between LAA and other activity; the problems of attribution; the effects of wider economic trends; the pressures of other priorities. However, it also illustrates that agencies are now much more outcome-focused. They take their starting point from the problem to be resolved rather than the agency agenda and, because most problems cannot be resolved by one organisation alone, there is much more joint thinking and collaboration. The research has underlined that LSPs have played a significant role in establishing a culture of partnership.

IDENTIFYING THE MESSAGES

7. Conclusions and lessons

'Equality is not just right in principle, it is necessary for:

- *individuals: everyone has the right to be treated fairly and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. To achieve this we must tackle inequality and root out discrimination*
 - *the economy: a competitive economy draws on all the talents and ability – it is not blinkered by prejudice, and*
 - *society: a more equal society is more cohesive and at ease with itself.'*
- (Government Equalities Office, 2010, p.1)

This is a long report, with many examples of practice in the main text and the appendices. It is important now to identify some key issues and lessons and state the main conclusions. The final chapter comments on future directions in the context of the changing policy environment and makes recommendations. First, this chapter reviews some of the assumptions that the research was testing and the findings reached.

7.1 Returning to the research questions

Do LSPs set different agendas?

The first assumption was that being a member of an LSP gives you power to set the agenda. The associated question is to what extent LSPs set agendas that differ from those of member organisations. Although LSPs are not themselves delivery vehicles, they can set a general direction for local policies and enlist the support of partners. It is important to recognise the distinction between the strategic overview role of the LSP and the delivery role of the LSP partner agencies. (In two-tier areas, the distinction between the strategic role of the LSP and the delivery role of its constituent partner agencies applies at both district and county levels.)

Sustainable Community Strategies identify priorities and establish local aspirations and LAAs provide a three-year delivery plan. Inevitably a high proportion of mainstream service delivery and funding remains outside the scope of LSPs, but statutory partners generally set out to ensure that their own policies fit with these overarching priorities. For this reason, having equalities firmly embedded in the SCS and the LAA is likely to have wide influence. The extent to which equality issues feature strongly as priorities depends considerably on the partners round the LSP table. But it is not clear how far there is a direct correlation between equality group representation on the LSP and the prioritisation of equalities. It

appears just as likely that both representation on an LSP and the inclusion of equalities priorities in an LAA reflect the existing approaches of public sector agencies (in particular, those of local authorities) as it does that equalities groups on LSPs pushed for membership and/or the inclusion of LAA equalities targets. It is also clear that representation, while important, is not the only way of ensuring that the voice of equality groups is heard.

The case studies in this research highlighted the wide variation in LSP structures and where equality representatives might fit within those structures. Equality issues were often compartmentalised within particular theme groups or sub-groups. Different interviewees in the case studies gave conflicting messages about how far they felt their presence made a difference to the business of the LSP. If the LSP partnership structures are seen as hierarchical, the ambition of potential members may be to have a seat on the LSP board. However, arguably more influence in relation to specific issues is possible within a theme group. This is especially the case where LSPs have restructured to meet the needs of LAA delivery and have shifted towards smaller, more task-oriented groupings.

What processes promote the equalities agenda?

The second assumption to be tested was whether engagement and partnership processes compensate for not being a member. The linked question was 'what processes promote the equalities agenda?' This study highlighted a number of ways of creating a fertile environment for advancing equalities, including:

- The engagement and consultation methods used by the LSP, which can range from the creation of dedicated structures to imaginative ways of consulting on documents such as the SCS.
- The importance of LSPs and/or their partners resourcing and building capacity in the local voluntary sector infrastructure, which can give them access to representative voices of equalities groups.
- Voluntary sector bodies themselves may need greater awareness of equality issues and to be organised in appropriate ways to represent the constituencies concerned or to influence the LSP.
- Public sector partner organisations also need to be fit for purpose for advancing equalities and hearing the voices from different equality groups. Many are giving greater attention to equalities, including having dedicated staff. One of the anxieties about public spending constraints is that these could be easy targets for cutting.
- Given the significance of the leadership and championing role of local authorities, it is important for officers to support elected members in their engagement with equalities and diversity issues as part of their representative role.

Have targets made a difference?

Although it is reasonable to assume that targets reflect priorities, this is not the whole story. The National Indicator Set is not designed specifically to focus on equalities. Some indicators can be disaggregated to target particular equality groups, but securing timely data can be difficult. The Set also has omissions, such as any outcome for LGB groups. Some of the perception indicators may provide a gauge of progress – for example, in relation to fair treatment by services – but their inclusion does not necessarily signify any targeted work. In addition, monitoring of progress has to be quite fine-grained to expose deviations from the norm and enable response to specific needs and most of the national indicators are not gathered at the fine-grained level.

Stakeholders interviewed recognised the need for some national indicators but most welcomed the reduction in national indicators (that the NIS represented) as a way of avoiding overlapping targets held by different central government departments. They hoped this reduction would allow policy to be more responsive to local needs. They argued that a good LSP, which understands the needs of its community, will automatically look below the level of NIs and identify what each priority means for each group. However, the literature review and case studies did not find evidence to suggest that the majority of LSPs did this. The research also found there is need for greater consistency not only across LSPs, but also within individual LSPs with respect to their approach to different equality groups.

The case studies made it evident that while LAAs attempted to tackle inequalities, the focus was often on specific policy spheres, such as crime or education, where partners thought progress could be made relatively quickly or central government was most interested in monitoring performance. Although issues such as hate crime sometimes coincide with equality groups' concerns, LAAs will not necessarily cover all equality groups' priorities. The rationale of many LAAs is based on 'narrowing the gap' between deprived and better off areas. Some LSPs explicitly adopt a socio-economic approach to change on the grounds that this will best benefit all. Some consultees thought government stress on community cohesion can support a focus on excluded groups. On the other hand, others thought it could bring some shades of meaning that risk alienating certain groups and distorting the equalities agenda, for example, the Prevent strategy.

Has prioritising equalities made a difference?

It should follow that LSPs that prioritise equalities make more progress. Although the research sought to establish whether this had happened, it yielded the least satisfactory evidence in relation to hard outcomes. But there are signs of increased joint activity by different agencies, which promises to avoid duplication and waste and be more effective than earlier arrangements. LSPs make a major contribution in creating a culture of partnership. Developing and negotiating LAAs was often a further spur to cementing joint

approaches. In other words, much of the equalities activity may still rest with partner agencies, but LSPs have been important enablers of activity. It has been within LSPs that much of the strategic thinking has happened and partners have been able to develop greater mutual understanding and greater awareness of the local context and the needs of different groups. The resulting relationships of trust have also been important for bilateral and other linkages leading to greater coordination, service improvement and efficiencies. These may not be directly attributable to an LSP; nevertheless they owe some of their origins to work begun in the LSP.

7.2 Looking at good practice

Part of the brief for this study was to look at good practice in relation to specific dimensions of equality. It is invariably easier to recognise good practice than to identify the elements that are replicable elsewhere because so much can depend on local circumstances or the skills and expertise of individuals. In any case, the scope of this study was not sufficiently wide to examine projects in detail, so the examples given indicate the range rather than necessarily signalling good practice. However, this report has cited numerous examples which illustrate that there are many dimensions to the effective use of LSPs and LAAs to promote equality, as summarised here.

Leadership

There is always a dilemma about how to build equalities into partnership structures, to ensure that, on one hand, the issues are not compartmentalised but, on the other, that they are not diluted and lost. A recurrent theme through the research was the importance of leadership in advancing equalities work. It is necessary for maintaining a focus on issues, ensuring equality representation and monitoring outcomes. Leadership may be demonstrated in different forms:

- Political championing through a cabinet portfolio holder or an individual senior elected member taking up the baton.
- Explicit and visible senior management support.
- Designated equalities champions in the LSP.
- Dedicated officer posts.

Most examples in the study were within partner agencies of the LSP, but some LSPs had incorporated ways of championing equalities. This could be through sub-groups that are intended to drive the equalities agenda, as in Leicester, or by bringing together equalities officers from partner agencies into a network as in Hampshire.

In all cases, the energy and knowledge of individuals is a critical factor. This highlights the value of having specialist, dedicated staff who can provide a centre of excellence. To be

fully effective, they need to have senior backing and to be seen as part of the mainstream rather than an add-on. Strong advocates within the VCS and equality groups also help by exerting pressure and bringing external expertise.

The issue of the added value that LSPs bring underpinned the research. As already stated, much of the direct work on equalities – such as dedicated staff, EqIAs and support to forums – is often carried out not by the small LSP team but by local authorities or other public sector officers. This may be inevitable given the greater resources available to public sector partners. The effects of this work percolate more widely and are often explicitly or implicitly endorsed by the LSP. It may have practical and symbolic value, therefore, if the work is badged by the LSP instead of only by the agency concerned.

Communication and messaging

There are a number of ways in which LSPs can communicate effectively. First, there are the consultation mechanisms used in relation to SCSs and LAAs. Consultation tended to focus on ascertaining perceptions of problems and identifying broad underpinning priorities. Equality issues were not necessarily identified nor were equality groups necessarily targeted for their views. How easy it is for LSPs to consult directly depends upon the presence of equality groups and existing links with them. The various equality and diversity forums discussed in this report are examples of potential ‘dialogue partners’ that can help to inform policy and be a route to communication with the interest groups represented. For example, Appendix 5.1 describes the Equality Target Action Groups (ETAGs) set up by NHS Bolton. These provide a means of informing practice within local health services and feeding back information to the wider community. It is notable that Bolton CVS has a role in supporting the ETAGs.

Second, there are starting to be more imaginative uses of new technology to connect with people, such as the way that Croydon collected views through a video cube, its website and wiki in its Imagine Croydon exercise.

Third, LSPs and their partners can make their strategies, plans and other documents directly available to the public. This is most commonly done through websites, although hard copies of strategies are sometimes also available in council offices or other public venues. Often, these documents can also be obtained in minority languages and/or large print, Braille or audio tape. Websites vary in how extensive they are and how easy they are to access.

Fourth, LSPs and their partners can communicate implicit messages about the significance of equalities where they model good practice in their own behaviour, for example in their recruitment and employment practices.

Data collection, disaggregation and analysis

A clear emerging message was that there is a business case as well as a moral case for equality. For many people, the moral argument alone should be sufficient. Certainly this accords with the general value statements in many SCSs. However, it is also the case that inequality has costs not only in terms of wasted human potential and fractured societies but also for the public purse. Data are necessary to demonstrate both needs and costs.

Availability of data – and sufficiently disaggregated data – is a key issue. It is especially problematic in relation to some equality strands such as LGB and transgender. One solution is specially commissioned research. Another is stronger working relations with local voluntary groups, who have service-level data.

The information sought by LSPs is likely to be primarily focused around issues that are critical to the delivery of LAA or other policies. It may therefore be incomplete from the perspective of equality groups. LSP or other public sector priorities may or may not coincide with their main concerns. This suggests a need to look at the links between LAAs and other local strategies to see whether other equality challenges are being picked up in other arenas. LSPs are starting to focus more on data sharing protocols and joint intelligence units that should also enable better data collection around equalities. Chapter 5 of the report gives examples, such as Sandwell, Croydon and Somerset. Another challenge is ensuring that the data collected is properly used as intelligence to inform policy and practice.

Uncertainty over the future of the overall performance framework for local government raises issues about how LSPs will measure progress in future. The Audit Commission's CAAs have been abolished. The Place Survey which has been a key element of the current performance framework will not run in 2010. LAAs are being reviewed with a view to fewer targets and outcomes being set centrally and having, instead, greater local accountability. This may provide opportunities for better local integration and pursuit of local priorities. But whatever happens to the national framework, the task of gathering, collating and analysing data will remain. During a period of reduced public spending, when all agencies are focusing on their own cuts, joint intelligence units which share costs should become even more important. But there is a risk that they are undermined as organisations look inward rather than outward.

Compliance with equalities duty

'...in the public mind, recent history has associated the idea of equality with bureaucratic finger wagging and legal restriction. Unfair as this charge may be, unless

the British people are persuaded that equality is a liberating rather than an oppressive ambition, it will remain an unfulfilled aspiration.' (Equalities Review, 2007, p.2)

EIAs are one means of demonstrating compliance with the equalities duty. This study has indicated both their potential value and the danger that they become a bureaucratic exercise. Appendix 5.2 gives the example of Nottingham's attempt to develop an approach that is better integrated, more focused and is more obviously relevant to those carrying out the assessments. Appendix 5.3 points to an LAA and SCS impact assessment toolkit being developed in Somerset but designed for wider use.

The approach called for in *What Disabled People Expect ... From Assessment to Action* (in RADAR's *Lights, Camera, Action*) also applies to other equality groups:

- Disability equality to be at the heart of the assessment.
- Disabled people not to be treated as a homogenous group.
- Public bodies to involve disabled people in assessing the impact of their policies on disability equality.
- Feedback and information about the improvements which were achieved.

It is important to move away from the idea that equality is just a matter of compliance with the letter of the law. Compliance is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of improving equalities practice. Examples through the report show ways in which LSPs have involved people from equalities groups in strategy development and influencing services. The general conclusion, however, is that although different LSPs demonstrate elements of good practice, there is seldom any coherent approach encompassing all the steps from strategic planning through to commissioning and performance assessment and reporting.

Involvement

A prerequisite of involvement in the LSP is the presence of organisations that can be the basis of selecting representatives and/or be 'dialogue' partners that can provide a voice for their interest group. They may take the form of forums, which include a range of equality strands or group specific infrastructure organisations and projects. All of these very often depend upon external support and capacity-building by LSPs themselves, their partners or the wider VCS. Appendix 3 gives examples of the way equality and diversity forums in Hampshire and Somerset originated and have been supported so that there is space to raise issues from outside the more narrowly defined LAA process.

Appendix 4 gives examples of structures and projects relating to different equality strands. They range from bodies set up by local authorities, such as Hull's provision for the involvement of young people and the Essex forum for disability organisations through to

independent forums such as the ethnic minority forums in Croydon and South Tyneside and support and advocacy projects such as Chrysalis giving a voice to transgender people in Hampshire. One of the themes – exemplified in the transition occurring in the Tower Hamlets LGBT Forum – is the journey from professional organisations speaking for their clientele to members of equality groups speaking for themselves.

Diversity in representation

The research findings tend to confirm that some equality groups receive more attention – and may be better organised – than others and it is significant that the same equality strands tend to be neglected in many places. Areas vary in the nature of their diversity and need to gear their strategies to local circumstances. However, this should not be at the expense of neglecting particular minorities. This in itself is a source of inequality especially as it is not always even recognised either by public bodies or the rest of the VCS.

Even where members of equality groups are on the LSP, presence is not the same as representation. For example, many women on LSPs are there for reasons other than their gender and neither purport to represent women nor have a mandate to do so. Further, people who are counted as representatives by their LSP partners may not be seen as such by their constituency for various reasons. They may be from advocacy organisations rather than themselves being members of equality groups. They may be from a particular religious or ethnic background, for instance, and the processes are not in place to enable them to speak for others. It may be because public sector partners choose and use repeatedly the same ‘usual suspects’ to the extent that they are seen as ‘poachers turned gamekeepers’; that is, they become representatives of statutory bodies to their constituencies rather than the other way around.

There are challenges in relation to the representation of equality groups both in securing the inclusion of all equality strands and in spanning the immense diversity within strands. Few LSPs succeed in the first, though they may have members with a brief to represent the different equality strands. In relation to representation and engagement, Leicester for example demonstrated awareness of the need to designate places for communities of interest on the LSP as well as providing support and training for representatives.

There can also be super diversity within strands; within, for example, an ethnic minority or faith group that incorporates different perspectives. Highly diverse areas such as Sandwell have recognised that a representative model is unwieldy in these circumstances and have introduced an area-based system of representation alongside a socio-economic approach to tackling inequality. LSPs have frequently developed links with neighbourhood forums or area committees as a facet of their community engagement. This can be effective for some equality groups in particular areas but as a means of outreach needs to be supplemented in relation to groups that are more dispersed, or who might struggle to get their concerns

onto a neighbourhood agenda. It is therefore important to have strand-based forums that can bring their specific perspectives and information about the inequalities they experience. The evidence from this study supports previous research in showing the wide variation in the number and strength of networks both across different localities and in relation to different equality strands.

Super diversity puts an onus on LSPs to undertake equality mapping and understand the nature of equality communities, in which there might be tensions and disagreements. It means that issues are complex; for example there might be multiple barriers to entering the labour market. The number of groups makes the mechanics of engagement and involvement in the LSP difficult as there are limits to how many people can be physically involved in particular executive meetings. Representation will be undermined if there is no accountability and if there are no means for representatives to engage with those they are meant to represent both to hear their views and concerns and give them feedback. To ensure that the mechanisms are in place to provide the best information about different issues and interests, it is necessary to have well-resourced groups that can articulate the case.

The study showed that, on the whole, LSPs do not monitor representation of equality groups and that some are more likely to be underrepresented than others. Even where it may be very challenging to include all voices at board level, awareness of this tendency should alert every LSP to examine its own position and take steps towards more targeted consultation and involvement.

Some people may suffer discrimination on multiple grounds because they belong to several different equality groups. There seems to be growing recognition of this in relation to projects that address the needs of ‘minorities within minorities’, but less awareness in respect of them having a voice. *‘We all have more than one identity, and understanding how these acquire meaning in the context of other characteristics such as socio-economic and family status and place is important’* (De Groot and Mason, 2008, p.6). Chapter 6 and Appendix 6 give some project examples ones that cross equality strands, such as the work in Bolton with Gypsy and Traveller young people (Appendix 6.1) and the Age UK work with older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (Appendix 6.4).

Improved equality outcomes

An implicit question in the study was whether LSPs and LAAs have made a difference to equalities. It was tricky to evidence hard outcomes, partly because ascertaining and attributing outcomes is difficult and would have required a more in-depth investigation. There were signs of improvements that affected certain equality groups such as children and young people. In this case, nationally driven targets clearly influenced the priority attached to particular interventions. There were also indications that many areas have

succeeded in narrowing the gap between the most and the least deprived, which would indirectly benefit some equality groups. On the whole, however, interviewees felt that LAAs had not so far made as much difference to equalities as the statutory duties on public bodies.

Nevertheless, LSPs have brought an outcome-focused approach. They provide an arena for strategic thinking. They have developed more trust and collaboration across agencies and associated mechanisms of performance management. They enable the involvement of the third sector in general and equality groups in particular. All of these are ways in which LSPs help to create a culture in which equality issues are more likely to be addressed and addressed more effectively.

7.3 Helpful factors

The case studies, in particular, pointed to factors that assist in progressing the equalities agenda:

- Resources are a prerequisite for equality groups themselves, to enable them to have the capacity for involvement and making adequate representation, and for partners in taking forward processes such as consultation, research, strategic development, EIAs and monitoring.
- Commitment - very often, committed individuals emerge as having played a significant role.
- Similarly particular people are important in giving leadership. They might be elected members taking on the role of champion or designated officers who can progress chase.
- A culture of partnership helps towards changing attitudes and embedding a collective approach.
- In places with a strong local identity, it can be easier to generate a sense of commitment to community wellbeing and thus a concern for equality.
- Tools such as the 10 dimensions approach are helpful as a means of translating goodwill into the practical action of monitoring equality.
- Statutory duties and the Equality Act not only put standards in place, but can also be used to raise awareness and propel the equalities agenda.
- Other government policies/initiatives, such as the focus on integration and cohesion, can also be used as drivers.

7.4 Obstacles

The case studies also indicated obstacles. Some were the converse of helpful factors: lack of resources, commitment, leadership. Others were attitudinal, cultural and resource-related, and included:

- The additional bureaucracy/paperwork perceived to be associated with equalities work and particularly EIAs. This was particularly the case if the staff involved had not had prior training, or were not convinced in advance of the real purpose and value of the exercise.
- A lack of expertise and/or dedicated staff is an impediment and is more likely to lead to negative attitudes among those left with responsibilities that they feel ill-equipped to carry out.
- Reference was sometimes made to an unsympathetic 'middle tier' of management.
- *'Fear of putting a foot wrong'* was cited as an inhibiting factor: for example, people talked of being afraid of saying something 'politically incorrect'.
- A major current obstacle and one where there is considerable fear for the future is pressure on budgets/spending cuts.
- Compartmentalising equality issues is seen as downgrading and marginalising them.
- Just as in some areas the local ethos can support attention to equalities, so the local culture or politics can be a barrier, either to all or to certain aspects of the equalities agenda.

7.5 Solutions

The case studies also signalled ways of overcoming obstacles. Prerequisites of them all are that they need people to take the initiative and responsibility, and, for some of them, additional resources are necessary:

- Awareness-raising and training to increase understanding of equality issues and to enable people to keep up with the changing legislative scene.
- Information and guidance that is relevant and accessible for the people concerned.
- Persistence by the officers with responsibility for equality to maintain a high profile for equalities and giving praise to show people that their efforts are valued.
- Work with politicians so that they champion equalities in their roles and set examples in their behaviour.
- Work with local communities to dispel myths and build greater understanding.
- Support for the VCS to build capacity and provide champions for equality within the community, as the VCS is often the route by which equality issues are raised, addressed and monitored.
- Support for equality organisations to help equip them to engage and represent their constituencies across all issues rather than within the silo of equalities.
- Development of the business case to make the equalities agenda more central and avoid it being seen as solely a matter of compliance or an added extra, which may require a mix of hard financial data on under-used resources, as well as arguments on the service costs of inequality.

- Development of regional/sub-regional networks to support key officers to enable sharing of information and good practice and identification of emerging issues.

8. Looking ahead and recommendations

This chapter brings together some of the messages from the research about taking the equality agenda forward in future.

8.1 The new public sector equality duty

The study found a general welcome for the new integrated public sector equality duty, the socio-economic duty and dual discrimination protection, which at the time of writing are planned to be implemented in April 2011. The equality groups which had previously not been covered by the public sector duty perceived the Equality Act 2010 as a major opportunity and a key driver. It was anticipated that over time it could have a massive impact. As one stakeholder argued, it has taken many years for most of the public to accept that racism is unacceptable following the first Race Relations Act. It will similarly take time for the cultural change and the change in attitudes required to embed the new act. The equality framework developed by the IDeA and the Audit Commission's work have also anticipated the new Act so a gradual change has already started.

Consultees particularly welcomed the new socio-economic duty. Under this, public sector organisations must pay due regard to socio-economic disadvantage. It implies that in drawing up future plans and policies, LSPs and their partners will have to prove that they are addressing socio-economic disadvantage (see the growing evidence base, such as the National Equality Panel 2010). Several stakeholders believed this could be a very powerful driver. However, the government is reviewing regulations pertaining to the Equality Act and this may result in a change of emphasis in relation to economic disadvantage.

Nonetheless, consultees raised several concerns about the new Equality Act. Some stakeholders who dealt with equality groups covered by previous public duties feared that the specific duties under previous legislation would disappear. The call for flexibility under the new Act means there will be less need to do impact assessments. Local authorities and public partners will be identifying priorities and may decide that a particular equality group is a low priority where no immediate action is required. There is no legal obligation to do a strategy document or action plan for a specific equality group. One anxiety was that there would be no equality performance indicators to provide a framework or standard methodology to allow for easy comparison of achievements and progress on equalities in workforce issues between local authorities.

Furthermore, because the Act does not require the monitoring of religion or belief and sexual orientation equality, there is a danger that it will not be possible to monitor progress on these strands. The study found that views varied about monitoring in these areas. One argument is that it is necessary to judge what people are ready to do. Starting by monitoring

could just cause problems. Rather, the first stage is to consult with these equality groups and to involve them in auditing service equality. Monitoring would ultimately be necessary to provide the hard evidence, but much could be done without monitoring and more qualitative research into needs could provide more evidence of why monitoring was required and make it more socially acceptable.

In general, stakeholders representing particular equality groups wanted a framework which was meaningful to their members and which enabled local communities to be clear how the LAA met their needs and how they could hold the LSP to account. They wanted a clear process with which local people can work. Some stakeholders took a more positive view arguing that the legislation would require the public partners to show how they have taken account of evidence and the impact of policies in deciding what to do. In other words, they will have to provide an evidence base to explain and justify their priorities and why some equality groups have been included and others excluded.

Much will depend on government guidance. Most stakeholders did not want too much guidance but they did want a strong message that all groups must be looked at across all functions. Several of the stakeholders were already working with the government on the guidance. Some believed more attention was needed on how EIAs would work in the future: who would decide whether to do them, what areas should be covered and how they could be done across equality areas to cover new priorities, dual discrimination and the new socio-economic duty.

8.2 Local-central relations

Several stakeholders emphasised that LAAs had been too top-down and that it was important for localities to decide their own priorities. Some case study areas also reported pressures to include particular indicators. Nevertheless, there was general agreement that Government Offices had an important support role. They were seen to have a stronger sense of place than Whitehall departments. They have existing networks with local authorities in their area which could be used to work through the guidance under the new Act and to share out the analysis that would be required. Given their location, they could also work with inspectorates to offer support to partnerships and organisations when weaknesses had been identified.

There was a call for more coordination between the GOs, the inspectorates and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) in supporting the equalities dimension particularly in relation to analysing community needs and equalities impact assessment. Mention was made of London borough equalities officers working together, supported by the RIEP, on the new Equalities Act and dividing tasks between them.

This approach was thought to be vital if district councils in particular were going to be able to meet their new duties under the Act.

There was also agreement that, if priorities for the area are to be negotiated successfully, it will be necessary in the future to develop capacity both within government and with local partners and their communities. The GOs' role has helped central government understand the complexity of local delivery and the way national policies impact locally. They have reflected government priorities and helped local areas deliver. Government needs a unique relationship with 152 different areas and this creates capacity issues. There was concern about the future of the RIEPs and recognition that a convincing case needs to be made for more resources. The coalition government's plan for the removal of regional tiers of administration, such as GOs and regional development agencies, has implications for the coordination and support of local partnerships.

8.3 Total Place and the single offer

Most stakeholders welcomed the move towards the 'single offer': negotiating with central government for greater freedoms on the basis of a strong track record of delivery. They suggested it should strengthen equalities since it would require a coherent analysis of the specificities of place and a full assessment of equalities issues and a full equality impact assessment. It is a further development of the area-based approach of LAAs, but it seeks to deepen the commitment of the partners and Whitehall and to help make things happen.

There is a danger, however, that the single offer means little to local community groups. It must not result in the neglect of community engagement and it is important to widen the debate and to engage local equality interests in formulating the local proposal for the single offer. Interviewees thought that Total Place needs to be 'people-centred' not 'organisation-centred'. Another danger is that the focus is on the 'total budget' and savings rather than the benefits that expenditure/investment can generate for disadvantaged groups. Total Place provides an opportunity to look at the culture of collaboration and service delivery and to focus on customer needs to gain a better understanding of the way that services should be designed. Reduced public spending, however, may mean that undue emphasis is put on the 'counting' - mapping public sector money flowing through the area to find where public money could be spent more effectively. Some interviewees remained to be convinced that pooled funding would lead to better outcomes rather than just cuts.

A parallel anxiety is that reduction in public expenditure might mean that public agencies retreat into their silos. Recessions impact more heavily on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. For example some equality issues have been exacerbated by the impact of the recession on the labour market (Hogarth et al., 2009). This calls for an even greater focus on equalities and human rights. There was some concern that this may not be reflected in

the single offer, especially if the money and support received by the Total Place pilots is not to be maintained at the same level as the programme is rolled out.

8.4 Future support needs

All stakeholders believed that more support was required if the Equality Act was going to be successfully implemented at the local level. It was agreed that the Equality and Human Rights Commission along with national and local public agencies have a massive job to do in order to ensure that legislative change results in attitudinal and cultural change and in local policymakers' understanding how best to deliver on equalities.

There was general agreement that guidance is important but should be short and accessible. Consultees commented that Commission guidance is not always readily accessible: you have to know about it and search to find it on the Commission website. Particular areas where stakeholders mentioned that guidance is needed are procurement, the new socio-economic duty, equal pay and the new single status implementation, risk mapping and impact assessment. Some thought that toolkits are useful but generally it was felt that there are too many toolkits. Where additional ones are required, they should be sharply focused and delivered as required, not all at once. Good practice case studies are helpful. They should identify the key principles that underpinned success, why the policy worked, how barriers were addressed and what levers were used. The recommendation that the Audit Commission could make further use of the CAA to identify lessons learnt both in local analysis and delivery and examples of good practice is now redundant with the abolition of the CAA, though use could still be made of existing data from the first round.

Stakeholders interviewed focused on more active forms of learning. Networks (or virtual networks through communities of practice) are particularly helpful. Seminars were supported, as were training and development programmes. Programmes being developed by Local Government Improvement and Development should be helpful. 'Smart equalities' will look at sharing equality mapping and local authorities working together on equalities. A second programme will focus on four pilots on partnership working and will be particularly relevant for LSPs. Active forms of learning are valuable, such as communities of practice, seminars, training and development programmes and peer support. Peer support is also valued as a means of 'seeing is believing': enabling key decision-makers to see at first hand the benefits of good equalities work in another area. Stonewall's workplace equality index highlights the best employers and encourages learning.

8.5 A time of uncertainty

The research was carried out prior to the general election in May 2010. Observations and lessons, therefore, are derived from arrangements, funding and performance management

regimes that either no longer apply or will be the subject of significant change. However, as the coalition government is still determining its policies, it is difficult to anticipate accurately which legislation and programmes will remain in place in future. The context is already quite different from the one in which the research was conducted and the infrastructure is changing through, for example, the abolition of the Audit Commission and the refocusing of IDeA by the Local Government Group to be Local Government Improvement and Development. Nevertheless, the principle of outcome-based approaches to service delivery and strategy development seems firmly embedded and this means several of the features embodied in LSPs and LAAs (and now Total Place) are likely to remain; for example, partnership working to achieve agreed local priorities. Some critical points emerging from this research will still apply, therefore, even in a changed policy context.

First, developing effective local strategies hinges considerably on the ‘story of place’: capturing the key opportunities and challenges in the locality. This must include the stories of equality groups. Second, a culture of partnership is essential. The LSP principle is important as a means of having public spaces for exploring different experiences and perspectives. Third, a legislative basis for equality duties is necessary. Although it will not by itself ensure that full regard is given to the needs of equality groups, it is a driver of cultural change as well as setting a standard for compliance. It is also important that duties are accompanied by appropriate guidance, awareness-raising and monitoring. Fourth, taking the equality agenda forward requires political as well as officer support. However, fifth, real progress can only be made through the involvement of equality groups; driving the equalities agenda cannot simply be done on their behalf. This means engaging equality groups in developing evidence bases, policy development and auditing service delivery. It also requires resourcing and support for the VCS in general and equality forums and infrastructure organisations in particular. Sixth, national bodies, such as IDeA and the Audit Commission, have a key part to play in bringing together and disseminating good practice.

However, it is now certain that, in addition to significant public spending cuts, radical changes are imminent. Elements of the performance framework for localities are being abolished (such as the CAA). Some parts of the national, regional and local ‘scaffolding’ are being dismantled (such as Government Offices and primary care trusts). There seems to be a more *laissez faire* attitude towards LSPs. LSPs and national organisations including the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Local Government Improvement and Development need to consider the implications of such radical changes. For LSPs, sustaining their work on equalities may require even closer partnership working: further sharing of information and expertise as well as joint strategies, shared services and posts. Some of the more integrated working that has happened, for example in London and in two-tier areas between county and district councils, may provide lessons for LSPs and local authorities elsewhere. Similarly, national organisations need to determine how the

roles that GOs and RIEPs have had up to now can be picked up by others to meet changing support needs.

8.6 Recommendations and implications

Recommendations for central government:

- Provide short, accessible guidance to LSPs acknowledging equalities and making a strong case for them to be treated as part of normal business.
- Allow for local targets as part of a flexible performance management regime to deliver on the equalities agenda at the local level.
- Recognise the importance of regional/sub-regional support to deliver on the new Equality Act and ensure there is the requisite institutional infrastructure (currently GOs, RIEPs, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the inspectorates) to support the equalities dimension, particularly in relation to analysing community needs and equalities impact assessment.
- Integrate equalities into the single offer framework.
- Develop a greater understanding of how the LSP level and potentially the Local Enterprise Partnerships level can contribute to the equalities agenda linked to the single offer framework.

Recommendations for LSPs and their partners:

- Discuss the LSP's role in relation to equalities and work out the benefits to partners of working together to address equalities issues.
- Monitor representation on the LSP and set up systems to facilitate the accountability of equality representatives to their constituencies.
- Ensure the LSP's understanding of its place is underpinned by knowledge of local equality issues, taking account of different equality strands and investing in community and institutional capacity so that all groups can participate.
- Ensure there is leadership and that there are champions at the appropriate levels: LSP, thematic partnerships, commissioning and delivery bodies.
- Ensure engagement systems give a voice to those not usually heard and, where engagement and monitoring is sensitive, use methods such as qualitative research and/or working with small groups.
- Apply good practice in the use of administrative data; work jointly on building simple robust systems for shared data analysis across the LSP.
- Consider joint support of equality forums by LSP partners to ensure they have the necessary resources to do their job and recognise this as necessary investment rather than seeing funding to infrastructure organisations as potential areas for cuts.

- Learn from best practice: visit other LSPs; have learning systems and training of LSP members.
- Consider the implications of reduced budgets on equalities work and develop strategies for shared approaches (such as joint staff and intelligence units) across partner organisations and/or across LSPs and local authorities.

Recommendations for Local Equalities Forums, CVSs and national equality groups:

- Look at adopting some of the good practice that exists: for example RADAR and BTEG for training and support; Age UK on good practice research.
- Ensure that 'representatives' on the LSP have support and systems to consult with and feedback to equalities groups.
- Ensure that there is the opportunity and space for all equality strands to have a voice in the operation and the decisions of the LSP.
- Support capacity-building at local government, LSP and GO level on being able to listen to equalities groups.
- Think about structures that really give influence: building from a wide base to gain legitimacy; giving support and well integrated into planning, monitoring and commissioning structures.
- Locally, consider how to work effectively across the LSP area on multiple identities and needs, such as those of older lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Implications for the Equality and Human Rights Commission:

- Investigate how best to work with inspectorates and identify any functions that may arise from the abolition of the Audit Commission and regional governance arrangements both to provide an external driver to improve on the equalities agenda and comprehensive data on performance over time, taking account of the abolition of CAA.
- Provide information on legal obligations and relative performance so that active citizens/organisations may hold public bodies to account.
- Support good practice - draw out more from what has been learnt so far.
- Help managers within large public bodies/partnerships make the business case for work to promote equalities in employment, engagement and service provision.
- Develop a national information resource on equality strands that are hard to evidence at local level, especially transgender.
- Look at the role of LSPs in promoting a public sector employment policy, working with unions and the LGA on how the workforce equalities will be developed further under the new Equality Act across the whole public sector.

- Revisit this agenda in the light of further research (see below) to see what more can be learnt.

Proposals for further research:

- Research on the effectiveness of targets in leading to better outcomes on equalities.
- Research into the implications of recent policy changes (such as personalisation) for commissioning in relation to equality groups.
- Research on the implications for equalities of policy trends such as those embodied in the coalition government's approach to 'localism' and the Big Society.
- Research on the impact of public expenditure cuts on the ability of equality forums to input into local decision-making.

Appendix 1: Literature review

The systematic literature review used online and print sources to explore relevant journals, national, regional and local evaluations, and 'grey literature' (such as internal reports and discussion papers) to provide information on how far LSP and LAAs are tackling equalities issues and to illustrate and define good practice.

Research questions

Since more diverse representation/engagement is seen as both an important goal in itself and as a necessary prerequisite of achieving more equal outcomes, the research project assumed that an understanding of the connection between processes and outcomes was critical, especially for producing guidance about good practice. A number of other research questions were identified which were also borne in mind in the literature review:

- Are LSPs and LAAs appropriate vehicles for tackling equality issues?
- Are they more appropriate for some equality outcomes than others?
- What are the factors within the LAA/LSP processes that encourage or inhibit the achievement of equality outcomes?
- How far has an equalities dimension been embedded from the start of the LAA process?
- Are equality duties informing the approach to data sharing, commissioning and procurement by the LSP?
- How effectively are equality impact assessments being used in LAA development?
- How effective are national and regional support arrangements both for the LSP members and for the wider community input into the process?
- How effectively do current performance management arrangements reveal the extent to which equality outcomes are being achieved? How well does the NI Set measure progress and fit in with the local government equality framework and the performance management proposals in the Equalities Review?
- Are LSPs looking at cross-connections between different equality groups (for example, engagement of women in faith projects)?

Sources of material

The review covered both academic and policy documentation. The academic sources included:

- ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Indexes and Abstracts)
- British Humanities Index
- EBSCO
- JSTOR, and

- Web of Science.

Policy sources included:

- CLG, IDeA, GOs, RIEPs, Equality and Human Rights Commission Regions, LGA, GEO, GLA, SOLACE, Regional Leaders’ Boards, Audit Commission
- sources relevant to particular equalities issues/work underway – for example, Women’s Resource Centre, Urban Forum, NCVO, CDF
- information provided by team members, and
- a general web search.

Search terms

It was necessary to be flexible in relation to search terms because different approaches work more or less well for different sources. Table 1 shows that we began by including LAA or LSP in all searches. Given limited time for the review, it was important to focus on the most relevant material, and widen out to more general terms only where that was not productive. We covered equalities ‘strands’ as search terms and other related key search terms and variously combined them with terms relating to evidence on equalities, commissioning services and outcomes.

Table 1: Search terms

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| • LSPs | • Age | • Equality | • Evidence |
| • LAAs | • Disability | • Equalities | • Commissioning |
| | • Gender | • Inequality | • Outcomes |
| | • Transgender | • Inequalities | |
| | • Race | • Human rights | |
| | • Gypsies and Travellers | • Discrimination | |
| | • Religion and belief | • Unfair | |
| | • Sexual orientation | discrimination | |
| | | • Lesbian | |
| | | • Gay | |
| | | • Bisexual | |
| | | • Trans | |
| | | • Minority | |
| | | • Minorities | |
| | | • Younger people | |
| | | • Older people | |

Stages

The first stage involved initial searches - recording where we searched, results of searches and how the material was filtered to exclude irrelevant information. The focus was on finding as much as we could, reading only to establish relevance and to obtain sufficient information to map what is there. In the case of academic databases, the searches started with abstracts and extended beyond this as necessary. As expected, the stakeholder interviews signalled and gave access to some documentation not otherwise readily available. Part of the purpose of the review was to map out resources and what is happening to identify the extent to which, and the means by which, equalities issues are being tackled by LSPs/LAAs. This was challenging given the amount of material available, but time constraints also made it important not to duplicate work done elsewhere.

The second stage involved further analysis to meet the other aim, which was to illustrate and define good practice. It was necessary to consider the relevance of the information gathered to the policy context and research questions for the project.

Appendix 2: Cases study areas

	NE	YH	NW	WM	EM	E	SE	SW	L
Age (young & old)		Hull							
Gender	South Tyneside								
Sexual orientation									Tower Hamlets
Religion					Leicester				
Disability						Essex			
Race				Sandwell					
Gypsies & Travellers			Bolton						
Partnership								Somerset	
Partnership									Croydon
Partnership including transgender							Hampshire		

Appendix 3: Chapter 3 examples

Appendix 3.1: Forum for Equality and Diversity in Somerset (FEDS)

The Forum is established as a network to promote equality and diversity in Somerset and provide consultation, monitoring and facilitation support to public, business and voluntary sector bodies and to encourage, through practice, the coverage of all the areas of equality with particular reference to the Human Rights Act 1998 and the law covering discrimination relating to race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation and disability.

Values: FEDS adopts the values of Somerset's Community Cohesion Strategy (2004-14):

- Communities are confident, inclusive and celebrate diversity.
- Everyone is treated fairly, equally and without prejudice.
- People feel safe, comfortable and valued.
- There is an acceptance of difference and zero tolerance of inequality.
- People are able to be visibly different.
- Everyone can live, learn and play without fear of discrimination.

Membership of FEDS is open to any group or organisation with an interest in equality and diversity. Its steering group should include representatives of six equalities strands. Currently there is representation of:

- Disability – via Compass Disability Services.
- Race – via Somerset Race Equality Council.
- Age – via Age UK.
- LGBT – via Somerset Gay Health project.
- Faith – via the Somerset Faith and Belief Forum.
- Gender was previously represented via a Rural Women's Network, which no longer exists; Compass is in touch with a new gender organisation that may take on this role.

FEDS is a key participant in the Community Cohesion Forum and works through the Forum to ensure that the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSC) and its member organisations' work is based in a culture of equality of opportunity and community cohesion. The purpose of the Community Cohesion Forum is to champion and promote cohesion in Somerset. Through the Forum, the SSC developed Somerset's Community Cohesion Strategy, which was launched on 9 November 2007.

Appendix 3.2: Nottingham Community Equality Forum

A citywide voluntary community forum with representatives from all six equality strands from over 40 community and voluntary sector organisations. The forum meets bi-monthly.

It is a means of:

- acting as a critical friend to develop a win-win situation for the City Council and the people of Nottingham in developing new policies or services or when carrying out an equality impact assessment
- providing a scrutiny function to ensure mainstreaming of equality and diversity
- advising, influencing and informing all aspects of the council's work including policymaking, service delivery and employment with the aim of improving services to all communities
- sharing information, experience and expertise with each other and the council, and working together to improve the lives of the wider community, and
- providing a way to consult and feedback from the bottom upwards.

The Forum is supported by the City Council Equality and Diversity Team.

Appendix 3.3: Hampshire Diversity Support Project and Hampshire Independent Equality Forum

The Hampshire Diversity Support Project aims to promote equality and diversity in Hampshire. Funded by the Big Lottery Fund for two and a half years from July 2009, it is managed by Community Action Hampshire in partnership with Winchester Area Community Action. It arose out of earlier work on equalities and diversity carried out by the Diversity Network Project (DNP; 2006-8), which had in turn built on the work of the Black and Ethnic Minority Awareness Project (BMAP) (2005-6). Both were funded under the Change Up Development Programme for the VCS and managed by Community Action Hampshire on behalf of the Hampshire Voluntary Sector Consortium. DNP was set up to:

- improve voluntary sector infrastructure support and increase voluntary sector activity with people from black or other ethnic minority backgrounds, faith groups, migrant workers, Gypsies and Travellers, asylum seekers, people with disabilities, and people suffering from discrimination because of their age, gender or because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender
- create a Hampshire Diversity Network composed of voluntary and community sector infrastructure and specialist support bodies serving communities
- ensure services provided by network members are well informed and engagement levels with diverse groups increased

- contribute to achieving race equality in the delivery of services provided by public and voluntary sector agencies in Hampshire
- implement the Hampshire LAA Priority H – ‘to empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over decision making and the delivery of services’, and
- initiate the development of a coherent countywide race equality strategy.

The DNP played a key role in information-gathering on ethnic minority and faith groups, migrant workers, Gypsies and Travellers, and asylum seekers through a series of meetings across the county bringing together people from a range of organisations working with people from these groups. The meeting findings were recorded in a set of district reports.

Another key output of the DNP was an Equality and Diversity Toolkit stemming from its work with organisations supporting Hampshire’s diverse local communities. It is a practical guide for voluntary organisations and community groups on how to promote equality and diversity, challenge discrimination and reach and engage with diverse communities.

The DNP also provided the foundation for the Hampshire Diversity Support Project (DSP), which aims to:

- enable voluntary and community organisations and groups representing minority communities to have a greater voice in local communities and at county level
- increase the diversity awareness of frontline organisations so that they can better meet the needs of minority groups and individuals
- build the ability of minority groups to secure and increase funding, and
- build the capacity of local infrastructure groups to provide development support to under-represented groups to improve effectiveness.

It set up Hampshire’s first Independent Diversity Forum, launched in November 2009 following a 13-week consultation exercise with interest groups, community and voluntary organisations, and statutory bodies. A strong message from the consultation was that the Forum must be action oriented and not a ‘talking shop’. The launch of the Independent Diversity Forum was attended by 100 people: 72 from community and voluntary groups and organisations, and 28 from statutory agencies.

A Forum steering group comprising representatives of different diverse communities with expertise in all of the equalities groups (race, disability, gender, religion or belief, transgender, age and sexual orientation) is currently finalising terms of reference and drawing up an action plan. The Forum will try to establish district forums where they do not yet exist and continue to promote equality and diversity training in the VCS using the DNP toolkit and diversity audit training. For example, diversity champions from district

CVSs have attended a diversity audit training course and are currently in the process of completing diversity audits and action plans.

Appendix 3.4: The role of Hampshire's Independent Diversity Forum

The launch of Hampshire's Independent Diversity Forum involved workshops:

1. *How statutory agencies could provide practical support to the forum and develop good partnership working.* The Forum could add value by:
 - Developing its understanding of: how services can support people; the constraints on services; how to influence change; and how to increase awareness of procedures, for example complaints.
 - Nominating a 'link' person to statutory agencies to act as a channel to and from the Forum, feeding back on Forum activities and supporting with signposting on issues that arise.
 - Doing more work with elected members to raise their awareness and understanding of the Forum and improve links to district forums already in existence.
 - Using a confidence mark, like the 'two ticks scheme', that public bodies could sign up to as a mark of their commitment.
2. *The Forum's aims.* Three areas were identified:

Challenging service providers

- Allowing the most marginalised to have a say and providing a database of contacts of statutory bodies with information on how to challenge and negotiate any complaints procedures.
- Acting as a conduit between voluntary and community organisations and statutory bodies.
- Providing information on the appropriate person to channel/challenge inequalities issues.

Communication

- Audit, collate and publicise information from statutory agencies.
- Establish a Forum website/blog of problems for access by individuals.
- Develop a model of good practice in service provision.
- Gather real experiences as case studies to exemplify issues to statutory agencies.
- Communicate clearly at all levels and with links up and down.
- Send a common message from the Forum to local forums to spread the word.
- Establish focus groups with statutory bodies.

- Use clear language and no jargon.
- Develop accessible publicity material with website links/training/equality tools.
- Reach out to groups, identifying needs and formulating action plans.

Improving service providers' understanding of need

- Establish a training arm to start 'at the top' and cascade the training down to achieve internal change.
- Meet service providers to discuss grass roots issues (needs mapping).
- Disseminate equality and diversity toolkit to statutory bodies.
- Gather intelligence about community groups and their needs.
- Involve Forum members in statutory service providers' impact assessments.

See *Report on Launch of the Hampshire Independent Equality Forum*, Community Action Hampshire (December 2009).

Appendix 3.5: South Tyneside Local Third Sector Partnership (L3SP)

The L3SP board is made up of the chair (CVS) and six chairs of the priority theme groups which aim to run in parallel with the LSP:

- Promoting a sense of place, cultural opportunities and wellbeing.
- Helping every child and young person achieve their potential.
- Making communities safer and stronger.
- Helping people to live independent and healthy lives.
- Helping people into jobs and encouraging enterprise.
- Building a sustainable environment with great housing and transport links.

The chairs are from local third-sector organisations chosen because they are well established and have a very good track record of delivering services to a range of groups, in particular to young people, disabled people, ethnic minority and older people:

- Age UK.
- Citizens Advice.
- Youth Action Volunteers.
- Connect (a community transport social enterprise).
- Healthnet.
- Groundwork.

The organisations (except Healthnet) to which the chairs belong also run the secretariat for the group. The priority groups are more networks than partnerships. Each runs six events

per year in each of the six geographical areas of South Tyneside. Two per theme have been held so far. The events labelled Speak and Be Heard are an opportunity for both individuals and third-sector groups and organisations to get involved and raise issues and have a voice which can then be fed into the main LSP structure.

Feedback from L3SP to the LSP can be in two ways. The chair of the LS3P priority group can attend the LSP priority group and discuss the inclusion of an issue with the LSP priority chair who can then take it to the LSP board. If the LSP priority chair is unwilling to take up the matter, then the LS3P chair who is also a representative on the LSP board can take it to the LSP board.

Appendix 3.6: Scope of Leicester Stronger Community Partnership

- Review and advise on the delivery and performance management of the LAA with respect to community engagement and empowerment, equality responsibilities and community cohesion.
- Notify the LSP about actions that demonstrate examples of effective practice in incorporating community engagement and empowerment, equality responsibilities and community cohesion in delivering the outcomes set out in the LAA.
- Where required, notify the LSP of appropriate corrective actions to ensure incorporation of community engagement and empowerment, equality responsibilities and community cohesion throughout the outcomes set out in the LAA.
- Encourage the development of relevant activities, engaging partners, service users or residents to achieve the vision of stronger and empowered communities and equality of opportunity and practice, using appropriate systems including specialised and/or joint commissioning.
- Review the LSP with respect to national equality legislation and national policy and strategies for community empowerment and community cohesion and to advise the LSP accordingly.
- Be represented by one member, normally the chairperson, on Leicester Partnership Executive and by two members (as appointed by SCP) on the full Leicester Partnership.

Appendix 4: Chapter 4 examples

Appendix 4.1: Opportunities for participation in Hull

Hull Youth Council is a citywide project supporting young people aged 11-25 to raise their issues, ideas and campaigns. It enables young people to:

- Participate through a range of fun, creative and challenging activities and projects.
- Become active citizens through campaign groups, school councils, consultation events, outreach work and citywide events.
- Put their ideas into action by working together with agencies and decision-makers who want to help young people make a difference.

The Young People's Customer Panel enables 11-19 year olds to share their views and ideas through completing questionnaires.

Hull Young People's Parliament was set up in July 2006 to give children and young people a chance to come together and debate their issues in a safe, supportive and structured environment. They set their own themes and agendas and any action agreed at the Parliament is then forwarded to the decision-makers, such as city councillors, Hull MPs, heads of council services, local authority partners, or the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. This is to ensure children and young people's views are a fundamental part of the planning and review of services.

The Parliament has emerged through partnership working and is fundamental to children and young people's voice and influence across the city. It does not replicate adult structures and approaches to engage children and young people but has required adults, including decision makers, to respect its autonomy. It provides a focus for children and young people to make their views heard. It is not about consultation but about active involvement with. and accountability to children and young people within Hull. It meets three times per year and the seven Hull Young People's Parliaments to date have involved over 1,000 children and young people. Issues debated included health, crime, racism and negative images of young people.

The Young People's Parliament is firmly embedded and recognised in the Hull Children and Young People's Plan as a key aspect of children and young people's voice and influence within the city.

Appendix 4.2: Older people in Tower Hamlets

Older people in the borough of Tower Hamlets represent 20 per cent of the total population and are involved at all levels. Older people themselves were involved in the Best Value Review in 2006, which identified key cross-cutting themes addressing all aspects of independent living – that is, what matters most to older people. An older people’s champion supported by champions in all LAA directorates ensures that older people are treated as a priority.

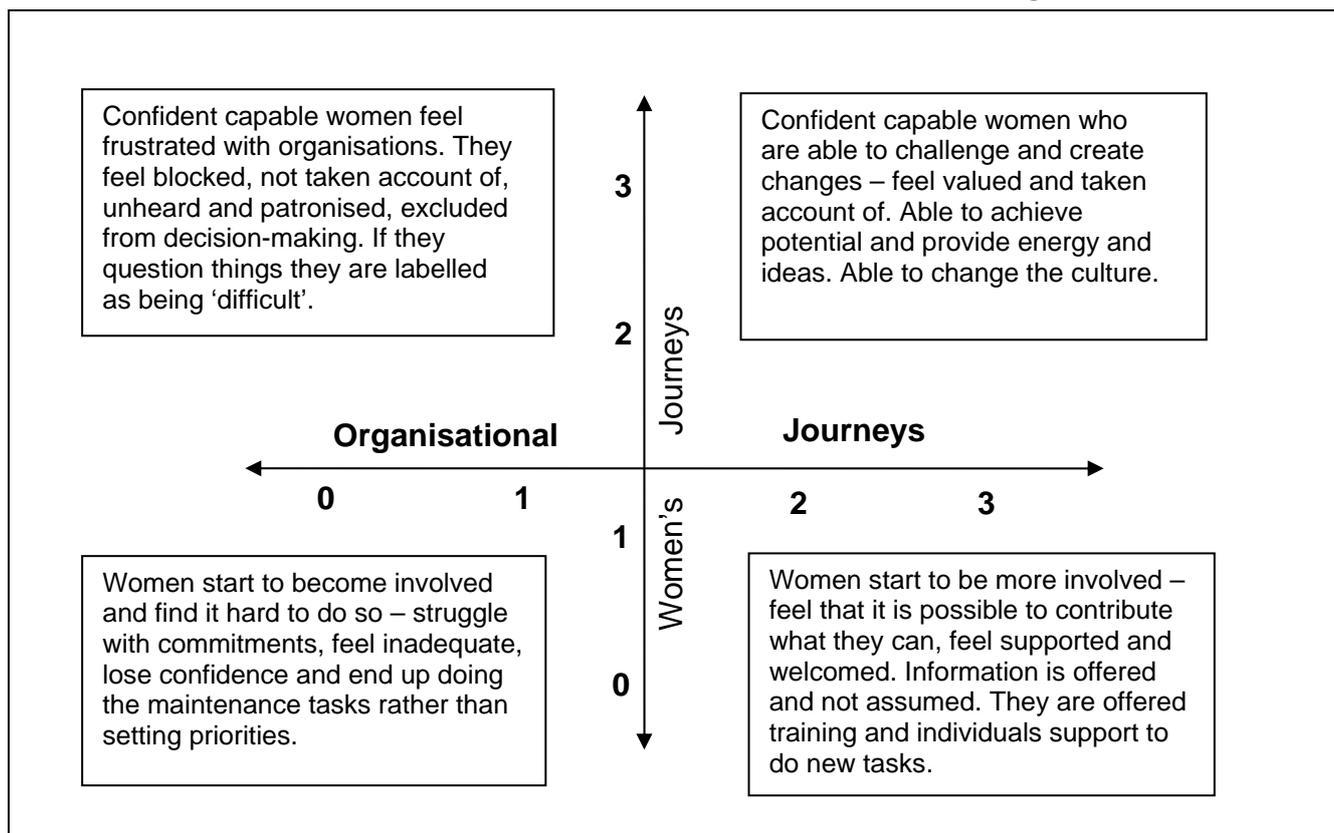
Tower Hamlets established a pioneering user-led programme through the Older People’s Reference Group and LinkAge Plus Pilot, launched in 2006, which has identified and reached isolated older people. Admissions of older people into long-term institutional care went down by 15 per cent from 2006/07 to 2007/08, and the average admission age of older people to residential or nursing care rose from 80 years in 2004/05 to 83 in 2007/08.

The Council and the PCT have continued to fund the LinkAge Plus programme. The user-led Older People’s Reference Group (OPRG) and the more strategic Older People’s Partnership Board (OPPB) make sure older people are shaping service developments and are at the heart of planning services. The OPPB is one of a network of health and social care partnership boards that engage with the major adult social care client groups in the design and provision of services. These also include: the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board and the Mental Health Partnership.

Appendix 4.3: Women Take Part Framework

Journey stages	
Step 3	Staying there
Step 2	Being there
Step 1	Getting there
Step 0	Not there

The Women Take Part Framework can also be used as a tool for change.



Appendix 4.4: Chrysalis - giving a voice to the transgender community in Hampshire

The idea of Chrysalis came from its three founder members – a counsellor, social worker and specialist advisor – who recognised from their workloads that people with gender identity issues were slipping through the existing framework of gender help agencies. Chrysalis was formed to help address this gap in service provision. Its mission is to provide self-confidence and wellbeing through education, practical application and support to people with a gender identity issue and specifically those with Gender Dysphoria (sometimes referred to as transgendered or transsexual people) enabling them to progress into becoming a whole person capable of independent living. Chrysalis was formed not as a social group but as a teaching and therapeutic organisation offering counselling, support and, importantly, life skill workshops to facilitate gender transition. It aims to open meeting centres across the south of England and currently operates three, one each in Southampton, Portsmouth and the New Forest, with attendees from as far east as Medway in Kent and as far west as St Ives in Cornwall. The centres hold meetings twice monthly for people and, since its formal launch in 2006, over 80 people with Gender Dysphoria have been supported. Chrysalis is relatively unique in offering support to individuals experiencing both male to female and female to male transition, and consequently provides a voice for both male and female transsexuals.

It is staffed by volunteers and while it has had a number of small grants (for example, from Southampton Council for speech therapy sessions) it has no core funding and this currently restricts development plans. It is trying to be self-sufficient by selling its expertise to the public sector and HR departments and so on for talks and convening workshops. Chrysalis is acutely aware of the need to get the voice of the transgender community heard and makes its presence known at public forums. It is a member of the Hampshire Independent Equality Forum and the chair of Chrysalis also sits on Hampshire NHS's Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

While the organisation has experienced bad practice in terms of engagement with public agencies, it can also point to a number of examples of good practice. Each of Chrysalis' meetings, for example, has an assigned Lesbian and Gay Liaison Officer (LAGLO) from Hampshire Constabulary, itself a member of Stonewall's Diversity Champions. LAGLOs are police officers and staff members with a special understanding of LGB and transgender issues and Chrysalis also encourages any of its beneficiaries experiencing harassment specifically to contact LAGLOs for help. Chrysalis has also been invited to provide training for Hampshire Fire and Rescue staff and New Forest District Council facilitates the use of a swimming pool for a transgender group with pool staff volunteering their time. A New Forest District Council member also invited the organisation to give presentations on transgender issues to both senior and line managers at the Council.

The organisation recognises that misunderstanding of gender transition is an obstacle to engagement with public agencies. An education role is needed and Chrysalis and similar organisations could provide this, although funding remains a problem.

(Source: www.chrysalis-gii.co.uk and interview.)

Appendix 4.5: Participation Networks Forum, Essex

'The Participation Networks Forum (PNF) is all about people working together in Essex. We are a strong network with over 60 different organisations that all promote a better quality of life in Essex and equality for all. The member organisations represent all sections of the community with a strong focus on disability equality and inclusion.

We want to make sure that the different services people use in Essex are of the very best standard and that the public has a voice in how they operate and that this voice is heard. We are very keen to influence improvements within all companies and organisations operating in Essex.'

The PNF aims to bring groups in Essex together to:

- Share and circulate information.
- Offer advice and guidance.
- Monitor service provision.
- Share and promote best practice.
- Promote equality and diversity.
- Take action on behalf of the membership.
- Promote a better quality of life in Essex and bring equality to all.

Among the member organisations are

- groups specific to a range of physical, mental and learning disabilities
- groups that link equality strands, such as Age UK, BME Carers and Terrence Higgins Trust
- advocacy organisations, and
- public sector organisations.

Information from PNF website: www.pnfessex.org/index.php

Appendix 4.6: Tower Hamlets Pan-Disability Panel (THPDP)

The Panel provides deaf and disabled people and others interested in disability issues with an opportunity to shape local services. These include housing, transport, education, training, employment, access to leisure, health and support services, and many others. The THPDP gives Tower Hamlets Council and its partners access to people whose lives are affected by disability, enabling them to listen to views and opinions when developing and commissioning services.

Members of the THPDP can commit to regular meetings where they discuss local disability-related issues. Themed sub-groups meet and work with the wider local community. The themed sub-groups then make informed recommendations to the council and its partners. The sub-group themes are based on One Tower Hamlets and the Community Plan themes. Members of the THPDP can also get involved in a way that suits them. If they do not want to make a regular commitment to meetings, other ways to get involved include by email, telephone, a postal survey and attending focus groups and events.

The panel is used as an arm of the residents panel. This is a representative sample of the borough population made up of around 4,000 local people who are recruited according to their background characteristics, for example age, gender, ethnicity and area of residency (LAP), and asked their opinions on a range of issues/services affecting the borough.

Appendix 4.7: Croydon BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Forum

The Forum is a membership-based organisation with 130 organisations and individuals. It was set up in 2002 to:

- Make representations on behalf of Croydon's black and minority ethnic communities to public sector agencies and other statutory and non-statutory organisations.
- Ensure that they are involved in local policy development, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.
- Facilitate joint-working among ethnic minority communities to develop best practice and create a unified ethnic minority voice within the Croydon Community Network and the Croydon Strategic Partnership.
- Promote networking, collaboration and partnership between the ethnic minority voluntary sector and mainstream agencies.
- Build organisational capacities.
- Ensure positive engagement with ethnic minority communities in all aspects of Croydon life.
- Promote good race relations, community cohesion and encourage equality of opportunity for all, throughout Croydon.

The Forum is responsible for:

- Electing ethnic minority representatives on the Croydon LSP and other local partnership bodies.
- Representing the views of Croydon's ethnic minority communities at the themed LSP partnership groups.

As part of its role, it:

- provides training and support to ethnic minority organisations to play more active roles within the Croydon Strategic Partnership, and
- supports black and ethnic minority representatives on partnership bodies.

Appendix 4.8: The Compact for Race Equality in South Tyneside (CREST)

CREST is a registered charity whose purpose is to:

- Work towards the elimination of race inequality.
- Promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

- Advance the education of the public.
- Advance the education of minority ethnic groups.

CREST is part of the Equality and Diversity Programme Board in South Tyneside as representative of one of the Communities of Common Interest. The Board is responsible for the Council's strategic direction of the equalities agenda in the borough, overseeing the implementation of the Council's Corporate Equality Plan, and ensuring progress is made to promoting equality and diversity.

Appendix 4.9: Hampshire Interfaith Network

The objective of Hampshire Interfaith Network (HIN) is the promotion of interfaith understanding, enhancing harmony between faiths for the benefit of the people of Hampshire.

Membership is open to individuals or groups belonging to the nine faiths represented on the UK Interfaith Network Council: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Baha'i, Jain and Zoroastrian.

HIN's purpose and aims are to promote religious harmony and understanding for the benefit of the people of Hampshire by:

- Encouraging and promoting knowledge of, and respect for, the beliefs and practices of religious faiths and denominations, but also recognising and respecting common ground among the religions as well as their unique characteristics.
- Consulting and cooperating in social and racial issues and other matters of material concern.
- Sustaining and strengthening community harmony.
- Developing channels of communication, reaching all age groups, especially young people.
- Enhancing understanding of issues faced by different faith communities.

The Network involves schools in the production of an annual Interfaith Calendar, which features designs from school children and young people relating to the religious festivals and events of the network's different faith groups.

(Source: www.hants-interfaith.org)

Appendix 4.10: Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum

The Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum in Tower Hamlets provides a great opportunity to celebrate the significant contribution that faith organisations have in the lives of people in Tower Hamlets, and has provided the space to identify how faith organisations can play an even bigger role in the future success of all communities who live and work here. One of the most important roles of the Inter Faith Network is to facilitate better communication and understanding between the different faiths in Tower Hamlets. In the current international climate, this role is a vital one. The Inter Faith Forum has set itself an ambitious agenda and, to achieve this, is working closely with a large number of faith leaders representing the broad range of faiths in the borough, Tower Hamlets Council, the Police and local umbrella and network bodies. By drawing together all the faith organisations in Tower Hamlets, the forum intends to:

- Celebrate the important contribution that religious faith makes to the lives of local communities.
- Foster greater understanding and respect between communities.
- Secure a more prominent role for faith organisations in regenerating their communities and delivering the borough's community plan.
- Provide a forum for sharing knowledge, resources and good practice.
- Speak in harmony when faith organisations address important public issues.
- Break down prejudice and discrimination based on faith.

Purpose of the Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum

The Inter Faith Forum brings together all religious faith organisations in Tower Hamlets to:

- provide solidarity in breaking down faith based prejudice and discrimination
- develop and promote a shared understanding of the common values of the different religious faiths and their communities
- facilitate greater understanding and respect between faith communities and contribute to greater community cohesion and energy for positive change
- recognise and celebrate the important contribution that religious faith has in the lives of local people
- secure a bigger role for faith organisations in the regeneration of Tower Hamlets and the implementation of the Community Plan, and
- provide a forum for sharing knowledge, resources and good practice, and for developing a shared understanding on important public issues impacting on the lives of local communities.

(Source: Tower Hamlets Inter-Faith Forum website.)

Appendix 4.12: Tower Hamlets LGBT Forum

The Forum is for those who live, work, socialise, study or visit the borough. A forum was first set up about six years ago. There were very mixed views about its purpose. It was a multi-agency group with a handful of committed community reps. After consultation, it was decided to change it. The relaunch represented a jointly established forum between Tower Hamlets partner organisations and LGBT individuals and organisations. There is a large mailing list: some attend regularly; others just come in relation to single interests.

Responding to an All Party Commission on Empowering Elected Members in the Community Leadership role, some training took place after which the lead member for equalities, who had previously ignored LGBT, agreed to publicise the relaunch of the LGBT Forum to fellow councillors. This was a radical departure from what had happened before and several elected members attended. Issues to date have been that 'a lot who attend are statutory agencies who want to tick the box'. Some others come because of a specific funded project. In both cases it can mean that there is no continuity of individuals attending.

The Forum is effectively in transition again at present from a loose federation to a more formal body as a preliminary to being able to bid for funding and develop a work programme in liaison with the equalities team but also with some interface with the LSP. At the meeting on 15 April 2010, three co-chairs were elected - a black lesbian; a trans woman from a Christian heritage; a gay Jewish man - and there is a steering group of eight people. The plan is to have an annual meeting with proper elections.

The forum aims to offer LGBT community members a chance to meet local, pan-London and national service providers and talk to them about what facilities they provide. It offers LGBT community members a chance to publicly question representatives from local service providers about their commitment to local LGBT communities. A need has already been identified for more focused work in relation to both older and younger people.

Members of the Forum so far are largely experienced middle-aged people and have been active in campaigning over the last 20 years and may be active in other groups, such as residents' associations. But they want to continue to extend the membership and attract more young people. For this they feel they must develop a work programme to show they have something to offer. The hope is that they now have a cohort to take the work forward. They are going to establish an online community centre to bring LGBT people together and develop some arts and sports activity and more civic engagement. It has been suggested to them that they bid for £10k from London Civic Forum to take this forward, but there is also a feeling that the council will have to fund it if the bid fails.

Various areas have been identified for initial focus:

- Homophobia.
- Schools – putting anti-bullying (homophobic) literature in school has been disallowed in some and the group has asked for a meeting with the Director of Education.

Later, as well as wanting to promote participation, they want to look at the needs of different age groups.

Appendix 5: Chapter 5 examples

Appendix 5.1: NHS Bolton Equality Target Action Groups

NHS Bolton, in partnership with Health & Care Together (Bolton CVS), has set up seven Equality Target Action Groups (ETAGs), focusing on: age, carers, disability, gender, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation. The ETAGs are a way for individuals, groups and organisations to inform and guide equality and diversity within local health services and to feed back information and good practice to the wider community and partner agencies.

NHS Bolton's commitment to equality

NHS Bolton recognises that people experience discrimination and unfair treatment because of their age, caring responsibilities, disability, gender, racial group, religion/belief or sexual orientation. We believe that by working with communities to better understand their needs we are better able to tailor our services in a way that promotes equality and eliminates discrimination and unfair treatment, and will ultimately help improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Bolton. NHS Bolton's single equality scheme sets out how we plan to achieve this.

This scheme describes our commitment to ensuring that services and employment practices are fair, accessible and appropriate for the diverse communities we serve and the workforce we employ. The scheme is an equality and diversity strategy explaining how we will:

- Promote equality.
- Work with partners, patients, staff and the local community in the development, implementation and review of the single equality scheme.
- Meet our legal responsibilities under equality legislation and the various equality duties.
- Ensure that equality and fairness are embedded in service delivery, planning, commissioning and employment.
- Create an environment where all staff and service users are treated with dignity and respect.

What do Equality Action Target Groups do?

Bolton's ETAGs include patients and service users and service providers who will advise NHS Bolton on equality and diversity issues relevant to them. Examples of ways in which the groups may influence service include; involvement in equality impact assessments and holding managers to account, raising issues relating to health concerns or barriers to services, identifying training needs and supporting the development of appropriate equality training for staff.

The work of these Equality Target Action Groups is highly valued and is demonstrated by the level of support and commitment given to them. For example, these groups are supported by NHS Bolton's Equality and Diversity Partnership, which is a multi-agency group, attended by Senior Managers and chaired by an NHS Bolton Board Non-Executive Director. The Chair of each Equality Target Action Group also has a seat on this Group. The Partnership reports directly to the Board of NHS Bolton and guides the work of the managers in relation to equality and service improvement. This places our commitment to Equality and Diversity and the input of the Equality Target Action Groups at the very heart of the organisation's decision-making processes. The Equality Target Action Groups are supported and administered by Bolton CVS.

(Source: <http://www.bolton.nhs.uk/your-pct/equaldiversity/index.asp>.)

Appendix 5.2: Nottingham Equality Impact Assessment of the LAA

Nottingham changed its approach from the overly bureaucratic EIA framework that was used for their first LAA to a more focused and streamlined approach in three stages:

- A small workshop with One Nottingham (LSP), the City Council, Nottingham Community Network and an external facilitator.
- Desktop analysis of equalities and diversity actions in the LAA target delivery plans.
- A large workshop of practitioners to look at the possible impact on equalities groups of the planned actions to achieve the LAA.

Possible impact was assessed in terms of:

- Opportunity – for example, does a particular group lose out because it never knows about the service?
- Access – for example, does a particular group lose out because it is prevented from accessing a service?
- Treatment – for example, once receiving a service, does a particular group lose out in the way it is treated?

In addition to the six equality strands, geographic area was also included as an equality strand. Criteria for establishing priorities were:

- Could action lead to a quick win for partners?
- Are there important inter-relationships with other LAA priorities?

- What level of impact will potential inequalities have?
- What resources would be available to address inequalities?
- Does it reflect a priority for the community?
- Does it relate to other priorities within or across organisations?
- Does it already target particular groups?

As a result, six priority areas were chosen: worklessness; skills and employment; drug treatment; new learning diplomas for 14-19 year olds; under-75 mortality, and teenage pregnancy. The One Nottingham Board looks at updates on the equalities work every six months and a complete review was undertaken after 18 months to decide whether a revised set was needed, depending on progress. The board agreed that the existing priorities were still relevant and should be retained.

Lessons from the process are:

- Need for (more) thorough briefing prior to the workshop so that participants would be better prepared – though there is also a risk of them giving pre-conceived ‘right answers’.
- Better publicity for the process to raise awareness about the equalities priorities and efforts to tackle inequalities.
- Regular monitoring and performance management by the One Nottingham Board is essential to maintain focus and accountability.

(Based on the IDeA case study <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=12922168> and updated.)

Appendix 5.3: Developing an impact assessment toolkit in Somerset

It was decided that, to make the impact assessment process a manageable one, it would be sensible to start with one Local Area Agreement Theme or one Community Strategy Priority and pilot an approach. Impact assessing individual Local Area Agreement Delivery Plans would enable the correct level of detail to be picked up. The Safer/Staying Safe theme was chosen as the first pilot area. There was a day event for public, private and voluntary sector individuals who mainly represented the Somerset Safer Communities Sub-group but also came from the Forum for Equality and Diversity in Somerset (FEDS) to act as ‘critical friends’. The programme combined a range of interactive exercises with presentations from key spokespeople.

The overall aim of the day was to ‘scrutinise’ the relevant LAA delivery plans in terms of equality and diversity, community cohesion and sustainability to ensure they were fit for

purpose and complied with legal and best practice standards. Other outcomes from the day were a shared understanding of the issues; identification of necessary changes to the SCS priorities and success measures, and to the LAA actions; identification of those responsible for taking actions forward; and development of a best practice model applicable to other themes.

The senior consultant from the SW South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership Promoting Equality and Tackling Exclusion Programme helped to design the one-day event in partnership with the County Council.

Lessons from the day highlighted the importance of:

- Prior communication with the chair and lead officer for the selected theme so that everyone fully backed the programme and understood what was required.
- Sending participants relevant documents, such as a checklist and guidance, in advance and with sufficient time to digest the information and prepare for the day.
- Not assuming that all participants had an average understanding of the cross-cutting themes. An initial session was needed on the principles and putting these into practice.

It was found that some areas for improvement applied to the development of the delivery plans themselves, which provided an opportunity for the County Council, on behalf of the Strategic Partnership, to review and clarify this whole area.

A key risk is that improvement actions are not subsequently progressed so that it is essential to consider how actions are monitored.

The Local Area Agreement and sustainable community strategy impact assessment toolkit has been designed for wider use throughout the region and will be available on the Somerset Strategic Partnership's website at www.somersetstrategicpartnership.org.uk.

Appendix 6: Chapter 6 examples

Appendix 6.1: Bolton Council's Traveller Education Service

The Traveller Education Service was set up in 1992 and provides both educational support and advice for families and works to support social inclusion. Its team aims to work with, and raise the attendance and achievement of, children from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities, and counter racism and discrimination. The service provides access and support to children, parents, schools, teachers and other agencies.

Successful projects have included:

- E-lamp – online learning provision using laptops for which the service won an ICT in Practice national award, category 'Inclusion – Primary & Secondary'.
- Access to Education Research project – working with parents to research issues and barriers to education within schools.

Following the arrival of Roma families in the area and increased government requirements, the service was restructured in 2006 and activity was refocused on:

- Transition: involving any kind of transition, from school to school; from area to area; from one life situation to another. Dealing with the most vulnerable children and families, the work is mainly outreach as well as partnership working with other services.
- Enhancing the curriculum: supporting schools to develop their curriculum to include aspects, elements and references to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures to address prejudice, to provide positive role models and to maintain general good practice.
- LEA development strategy: mainstreaming of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller issues on the wider agenda and promoting their recognition as a minority ethnic group, for example Governor meetings, Traveller consultation, primary and secondary strategies.

Current areas of work vary according to the individual needs, but include: enhancing the curriculum in all schools; specialist advice and support for schools and pupils; advice on school procedures; early years intervention; family support; pupil support; youth work and activity groups; transitional support; crisis and advocacy intervention; training; resources for loans.

Appendix 6.2: Tower Hamlets – No Place for Hate

- The No Place for Hate Forum, which began as the Race Forum, then became the Race and Hate Inter-Agency Forum, now has champions across all equality strands.
- There is a pledge that both organisations and individuals can sign in order to commit themselves in specific ways to tackling hate and discrimination.
- A multi-agency Hate Incidents Panel was set up to review and coordinate service provision.
- A Third Party Reporting Project with Home Office funding brings key agencies together and has 15 reporting sites, identified following consultation with various networks to find out where different equality groups would be comfortable. There are about 180 trained staff and, across the centres, 40-50 languages are spoken. In the first year, there was a 40 per cent increase in reporting.
- In a bid to deter youngsters from getting involved in hate-related crime a 'hate crime' bus was used in certain areas over a concentrated period of time. Young people were able to take part in workshops and role play designed to help them develop an understanding of what it is like to be a victim and make them more tolerant of other social groups.
- A film, *No Place for Hate*, was premiered on 25 March 2010 at the London Muslim Centre, E1, to an audience representative of the borough's diverse community. It is a Springboard Trust initiative in partnership with the council that uses interviews with faith leaders, teachers in schools and madrassas, and police and other community figures in the borough to explore the benefit of opening up the communication channels between different religious and ethnic communities within Tower Hamlets.

Appendix 6.3: Bolton Community Cohesion Project

This encompasses a wide range of projects grouped in relation to Prevent objectives, although in many cases some projects will address more than one objective:

1. Challenging violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices includes several strands of work with young people, women and faith groups, such as improving service providers' understanding of Islam in relation to women's needs, reviewing citizenship in schools and madrassas, and an Imams and Madrassas leadership programme.
2. Disrupting those who promote violent extremism and supporting the institutions where they are active includes a mentoring and counselling project and training partners to understand the signs and symptoms related to extremism.
3. Supporting individuals who are being targeted and recruited to the cause of violent extremism includes a Prison and Offenders Project as well as projects under 1 and 2.

4. Increasing the resilience of communities to violent extremism, for example by improving governance of Islamic institutions, improving understanding on the part of service providers about Islam and citizenship and parenting workshops.
5. Addressing the grievances that ideologues are exploiting by working with the Muslim Youth and Women's Forums.
6. Develop Prevent-related research and analysis by mapping communities.
7. Strategic communication.

Appendix 6.4: Opening Doors

This is an Age Concern project that acknowledges the existence of, and specific needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people over the age of 55. The project runs several social groups, provides a monthly newsletter and organises personal development classes. It runs a regular event with the Metropolitan Police and an annual information event bringing older LGBT people and service providers together. It runs awareness-raising and training initiatives for care professionals. It enables an older people's presence at Gay Pride. The project began in January 2008 with the appointment of two development workers, one for lesbian women and one for gay men, covering five boroughs in central London. There is funding from various sources (City Parochial Foundation, HBOS, HO, local authorities), all with different timescales and expectations, but this has enabled the project to combine very direct services to individuals and groups with more strategic work in influencing and raising the awareness of core statutory and voluntary agencies working with older people.

By the end of November 2009, there were 252 men and 87 women service users, of whom four were identified as transgender. There were challenges in reaching much older people especially lesbians over 80, those with dementia and those very dependent. Underrepresented groups also include older disabled people with disabilities, those from ethnic minority communities and transgender people.

Issues encountered:

- Isolation and ageism within the LGBT 'scene'.
- Need for more age-specific groups.
- Low self-esteem, alcohol and drug use and mental health issues common among LGBT people. This generation had experienced multiple bereavements at peak of AIDS crisis. Some are living with HIV.
- Many had experienced direct or indirect homophobia and haunted by fear of discrimination and homophobia.

- People are still inhibited about reporting homophobic crime because of experiences prior to decriminalisation when homosexuals were a 'soft target' for police.
- Fear of moving into sheltered housing or a care home because of fear of discrimination.
- A lot of older LGBT people feel their needs are not met by mainstream services.

Opening Doors provided a bridge between older LGBT community and the police. The same approach could be used to link older LGBT people with health and social care policymakers and providers.

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Based on a literature review, case studies in 10 English local authority areas and interviews with more than 20 stakeholders, this report examines the role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Area Agreements (LAAs) in promoting equality. The findings show that while LSPs and LAAs do attempt to tackle inequalities, there is wide variation in their levels of success, which is dependent on a number of factors, including: the structure of the LSP and how equality representatives fit into those structures; the use of national indicators to monitor progress at a local level, and the involvement in LSPs of organisations that can provide a voice for their interest group. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for LSPs and other agencies.