



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

## **Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships**

**Mainstreaming: A briefing note for LSPs by LSPs**



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**May 2004**

**University of Warwick: Warwick  
Liverpool John Moores University: Liverpool  
University of the West of England: Bristol  
Office for Public Management: London**

**Department for Transport : London  
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London**

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May 2004.

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# Summary

This report reflects the work of an action learning set comprising nine LSPs and the Health Development Agency. It has been commissioned by the ODPM and DfT to provide guidance materials - specifically developed from local perspectives - to support other LSPs and local, regional and central partners and policy-makers<sup>1</sup>.

One of the major intended impacts of LSPs is upon the use of resources across partner organisations. Joint programmes, shared resources and pooled budgets figure strongly in government aspirations for joined up working, with LSPs expected to manage the co-ordination or integration of currently separate funding streams. There is also reliance upon LSPs to 'mainstream'.

## Clarifying concepts and terminology

The set identified two uses of the term 'mainstreaming':

- Strategic mainstreaming is the refocusing of mainstream programmes (and mainstream funding) on to targets which are agreed and shared by local partners, reflecting the pattern of local needs, including those of deprived communities. This approach is sometimes known as bending or re-shaping mainstream programmes.
- Mainstreaming is sometimes used to describe a "bottom up" approach, under which the aim is to spread approaches and learning from localised, short-term pilots, frequently on the periphery of mainstream services, to mainstream programmes; and to achieve sustainable funding for these pilots. This can be one means to the end of strategic mainstreaming.

Motivations for alignment of resources across partner agencies include:

- Achieving better outcomes for users in general or for specific client groups
- Solving intractable problems
- Addressing issues which come together at a small area level
- Supporting innovation in service delivery
- Increasing the efficiency of resource use.

Joint resourcing can be an important means of developing or implementing strategic mainstreaming. The set recognised a spectrum of approaches to joint resourcing ranging from aligning to pooling resources, and from resources in general (including people and facilities) to budgets in particular.

There has been a particular focus recently on enabling pooled budgets. Key features of pooled budgets are that they provide:

- Flexibility in the way funds can be used

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<sup>1</sup> As such this report does not necessarily represent the views of government.

- Shared responsibility for delivering the outcomes, including responsibility for working effectively together
- Clear responsibility for the individual budgets that fund combined activities; and
- A clear understanding of the relationship between those contributing to the budget, if necessary through written protocols or memoranda of understanding.

The host of the pooled budget provides reports that flow back into each partners' existing financial accountability arrangements. In this sense, funds contributed to the pooled budget remain "tagged".

The set noted that a "genuinely" pooled budget would have the following features:

- Pooled for a clear purpose
- Joint responsibility for under/overspend
- Money pooled loses its "tag".

This last feature would mean that new governance, management and administration arrangements would be needed, effectively creating a new public service organisation.

## **Local responses**

Local decision makers respond depending on their own position within the resource system, in terms of:

- The stage in the resource system which they operate
- The level held within the organisational hierarchy.
- The extent of the geographical space at which they operate.

## **Barriers to mainstreaming and aligning resources**

There is a widespread view that barriers to aligning resources stem from the limits which central government places on local discretion, and that the possibilities for using resources in different ways are limited. This was only partly borne out by the set's discussions. Although there are some specific issues relating to the mechanics of pooling resources, most of these technical issues can be worked round. The majority of the barriers identified related to organisational cultures and the perspectives of individuals at different levels in organisations. These barriers need to be worked through. Perspectives of elected members/board members and middle managers can be particularly significant.

## **Catalysts for mainstreaming and aligning resources**

Although the best catalysts for strategic mainstreaming will depend on local circumstances, the set identified a number of recurring themes.

The role of individual leaders is critical to achieving the mainstreaming agenda. There is no substitute for enthusiasts in key leadership positions who are able to lead the necessary process

of reflection across partners and to broker changes, or for senior level sign-up across the partner organisations. In addition, financial incentives, such as LPSA rewards, can provide an incentive for identification and achievement of shared targets.

Alignment of planning processes, to enable resources to be more effectively allocated or re-allocated to respond to community planning priorities, is vital. Without this, there is a danger that resources are only re-allocated at the margins. However, most local choice about plans and formats is available to the best performing authorities in CPA terms and there is a risk that this will inhibit partnerships involving less good authorities from progressing alignment of planning across partners.

Aligning of planning and resources is a first step, but this needs to be part of a performance management system if plans are to be translated into action on the ground and lessons are to be learnt through monitoring and review.

Pump priming funding can play an important role in oiling the wheels of partnership working and providing opportunities to learn about new ways of pooling resources and working together. But a number of practical challenges have to be overcome in order to use funds targeted on particular neighbourhoods to lever strategic mainstreaming.

More efficient and flexible use of resources can be achieved by creative combinations of joint resourcing. By, for example, partnership working across statutory and voluntary agencies, and virtual teams, major improvements in access to services can be achieved (and perhaps faster) without the need for formal pooled budgets.

## **Conclusions**

The LSP has a number of roles in facilitating the alignment of resources and strategic mainstreaming, including:

- Collection and pooling of information on patterns of resource use
- Developing a shared vision and identifying priorities for community outcomes
- Strategic review of options for realignment of resources
- Facilitation of change
- Learning and dissemination of results across partners
- Reconciliation of tensions between individual organisational accountabilities and collective responsibilities to LSP, and unblocking when tensions arise.

National roles are also of great importance in exerting external influence, which needs to continue to be balanced between pressures and incentives.

The issue of mainstreaming is on the agenda across the country. There is progress and learning at local level. The pace may be slow initially, but this can be expected to accelerate as a result of spreading of experience and as partnership working becomes the 'day job' for managers

across services. Mainstreaming of partnership working in organisational systems and personnel systems will also help.

# 1. Introduction

This briefing paper is an output from a programme of action research sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Department for Transport, as part of a wider evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The overall aims of the action research are to facilitate and support the development of LSPs, to evaluate implementation processes and to inform policy. An overview of the evaluation is included as Appendix 1 and a list of the action research topics within the programme is included as Appendix 2.

The paper reflects the work of an action learning set involving representatives from nine LSPs and the Health Development Agency. Membership of the set is given in Appendix 3. Members of the set met four times between May and September 2003, with support from The Office for Public Management and University of West of England, Bristol, including support for some specific research in one locality over the summer.

The purpose of the set was to learn about existing practice, to understand and clarify the barriers to and opportunities for pooling resources, and to develop good practice in relation to mainstreaming. Within these broad parameters initially agreed with ODPM, the set defined its own programme of work, focussing on the issues on which set members thought that LSPs would most appreciate guidance. Thus the agenda was set by LSPs themselves rather than being pre-determined by the research team or sponsors.

The learning set has been clear that pooling resources is not an end in itself, and has in practice pursued four main objectives:

- To develop shared understanding of terminology and concepts
- To understand and clarify the barriers to and opportunities for realignment of resources
- To provide a framework within which LSPs might be better able to identify where and how to pursue realignment
- To describe examples of 'action areas' where realigning resources has been explored.

The work of the set has benefited from, and is complementary to, the work of the national roundtable on local strategic planning, which has been co-ordinated by the Health Development Agency.<sup>2</sup>

This paper begins by summarising the motivations for mainstreaming and by defining what is meant by mainstreaming and the relationship between mainstreaming and pooling resources. It goes on to describe a range of local responses, which show how mainstreaming can be promoted by different means in different circumstances, and to draw conclusions about LSP and national roles. The paper is intended to provide frameworks and examples to assist LSPs and

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<sup>2</sup> Health Development Agency (2004) *Pooling resources across sectors: a report for local strategic partnerships* (forthcoming).

those who support them in considering what changes might be appropriate to help meet local objectives.

Users of this report will find it easiest to read through from the beginning rather than dipping in.

## **2. Confirming motivations and definitions**

One of the major intended impacts of LSPs is upon the use of resources across partner organisations. Joint programmes, shared resources and pooled budgets figure strongly in government aspirations for joined up working, with LSPs expected to manage the co-ordination or integration of currently separate funding streams. There is also reliance upon LSPs to 'mainstream' (a term with several meanings, see below). The reasons for and the relationships between these aspirations need to be kept in mind.

### **Motivations**

The pressure from government to address issues of mainstreaming and joint resourcing comes through LSP guidance, central and local government modernisation, performance targets, the requirement to prepare a community strategy and a neighbourhood renewal strategy (in NRF areas) and other external pressures (inspectors, CPA targets, Local Agenda 21 etc). This pressure is built on the foundations of research and policy development about how to respond to social exclusion.<sup>3</sup>

In the context of this policy background and the need to make the best use of limited resources, LSP partner organisations – and the individual policy makers and managers within them - have recognised a variety of motivations to engage with mainstreaming and joint resourcing. In summary, these include:

- Achieving better outcomes for users in general or for specific client groups
- Solving intractable problems
- Addressing issues which come together at a small area level
- Supporting innovation in service delivery
- Increasing the efficiency of resource use.

### **What is meant by mainstreaming**

The term mainstreaming is widely, and often loosely, used. The set began by exploring different definitions of mainstreaming and identified two main types.

### **Strategic mainstreaming**

Strategic mainstreaming is the refocusing of mainstream programmes (and mainstream funding) on to targets which are agreed and shared by local partners, reflecting the pattern of local needs, including those of deprived communities. This reflects the definition used by the 'Across

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<sup>3</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (2000) *Joining It Up Locally* Volumes I and II, Report of Policy Action Team 17. London DTLR.

HM Treasury (2000) *Government Intervention in Deprived Areas*, Spending Review 2000.

Government' Whitehall Co-ordination Unit who point to the overall objective of 'skewing the allocation of main resources – such as the police and health – to better target the most deprived areas'<sup>4</sup>: The common principles underlying this are:

- Re-shaping services to ensure they can benefit deprived areas by removing any blockages to deprived areas receiving an increased level of support
- Joining up different programmes to avoid gaps
- Developing and running policies that target the needs of deprived people or areas
- Learning from what works and improving the way we do things based on those lessons.

It recognises the aim that the multiple and complex needs of the most deprived communities should be the focus of attention across agencies. This approach is sometimes known as bending or re-shaping mainstream programmes.

The Audit Commission's usage in describing mainstreaming of neighbourhood renewal is slightly different<sup>5</sup>, but also reflects a strategic view:

- Establishing corporate policies
- Re-allocating (bending) resources
- Redesigning service provision
- Improving public access to services.

### **Bottom-up mainstreaming**

Mainstreaming is sometimes used to describe a "bottom up" approach, under which the aim is to spread approaches and learning from localised, short-term pilots, frequently on the periphery of mainstream services, to mainstream programmes; and to achieve sustainable funding for these pilots. Such pilot projects or initiatives are often funded by central government grant (or perhaps LPSA pump priming), or by mixed central and local funding, and typically involve multi-agency partnerships. Bottom-up mainstreaming is one route to developing strategic mainstreaming. (This type of mainstreaming may be nothing to do with deprivation – the pilots could be about efficiency or general effectiveness of services. This process is about changing policy/practice on the basis of the results of an experiment)

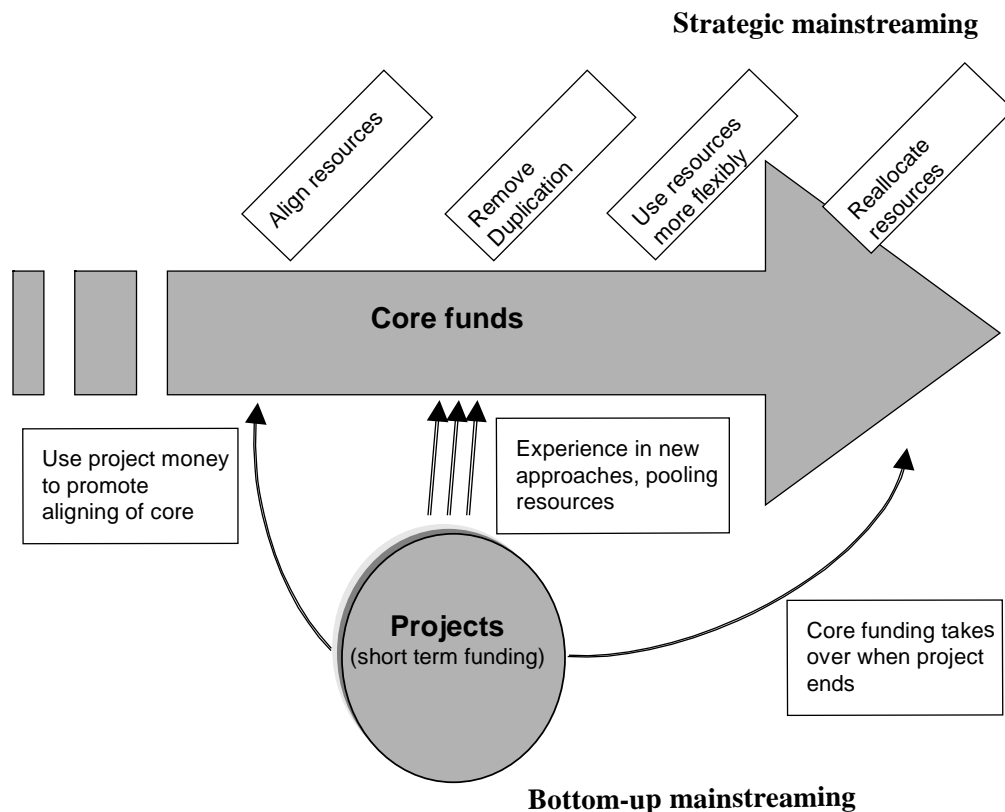
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<sup>4</sup> There is more than one definition of mainstreaming on the NRU web site. This is on [www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/acrossgov.asp](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/acrossgov.asp)

<sup>5</sup> Audit Commission (2002a) *Neighbourhood Renewal Policy Focus*. London: Audit Commission  
Audit Commission (2002b) *Mainstreaming Neighbourhood Renewal Public Sector Handbook* London  
Audit Commission

## Relationship between strategic and bottom up mainstreaming

This understanding of strategic and bottom-up mainstreaming is illustrated in the following diagram.



This illustrates how the core (or mainstream) funds of partners may be realigned by being used:

- in ways that achieve synergy between separate organisational budgets (or fill gaps);
- more efficiently by removing duplication between agencies;
- more flexibly to respond to user needs ;
- to re-allocate to target particular neighbourhoods of client groups.

It also illustrates the point that initiatives or projects (with short term, unsustainable, resourcing), may have three functions:

- Acting as leverage to promote realignment of the core
- Support for innovation and change in the core
- Establishing sustainable activities as initiatives are incorporated into the core

## Research evidence

Evidence about mainstreaming stems from a long history of attempts to avoid reliance on small area-based initiatives to address problems of disadvantage. For over a quarter of a century urban

policy has been predicated on the need to engage main programmes<sup>6</sup>. Yet there is also a long history of failure to bend main programmes. The major Department of the Environment review of urban policy<sup>7</sup> concluded that the withdrawal of main programme resources from priority localities was a major contradiction in policy. This observation was reinforced by the Social Exclusion Unit's conclusion that 'Mainstream services have failed to deliver analysis of the neighbourhood issue (SEU 2000a p. 26)<sup>8</sup>. The major cross-cutting Treasury-led review of deprived areas policy reinforced this view in concluding 'main services frequently fail to deliver outcomes in deprived areas...targeted initiatives often shore them up...this should change so that deprived areas get the main programme priority they need'<sup>9</sup>.

Although there are many recent examples of joint funding of developments in health and social care (see below), published research evidence on the extent of mainstreaming is as yet limited.

The inflexibility of government programmes – at central and local levels – was further evidenced in DTLR/ODPM research which found a continuing failure to join up mainstream policy and action to address cross-cutting issues<sup>10</sup>. Mainstreaming was one issue examined in a study on the Co-ordination of Area Based Initiatives, commissioned by ODPM and published through the Regional Co-ordination Unit and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. The focus of this work was specifically on the linkages between Area Based Initiatives and on the long term sustainability of ABIs. The study, based on research which predates the establishment of LSPs and the more recent policy emphasis on mainstreaming, concluded the following.

Most ABIs represent a distraction from mainstreaming rather than a contribution to new ways of thinking about and dealing with core problems in mainstream services. ABIs must be more closely connected into the mainstream, and government – central and local – needs to make a major investment in the transfer of learning from ABIs into mainstream service delivery.<sup>11</sup>

The weakness of mainstreaming has been documented by the Audit Commission<sup>12</sup>, whilst early evidence from the 2003 annual report on the evaluation of New Deal for Communities<sup>13</sup> and from Neighbourhood Management evaluations also suggested either the absence or the fragility of mainstreaming activity. Barriers appeared to be

- Uncertainty about what mainstreaming might mean

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<sup>6</sup> Department of the Environment (1977) Policy for Inner City

<sup>7</sup> Robson B. et al (1994) Assessing the Impact of Urban Policy London HMSO

<sup>8</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (2000a, b) Joining It Up Locally Volumes I and II, Report of Policy Action Team 17. London DTLR.

<sup>9</sup> HM Treasury (2000) Government Intervention in Deprived Areas, Spending Review 2000. p 7

<sup>10</sup> Stewart M., Goss S. et al. (1999) Cross – cutting issues affecting local government London DETR

Richards S. et al (1999) Cross-cutting Issues in Public Policy and Public Services London DETR.

<sup>11</sup> DTLR (2002) *Collaboration and Co-ordination in Area Based Initiatives*. London NRU/RCU

<sup>12</sup> Audit Commission (2002a) Neighbourhood Renewal Policy Focus London: Audit Commission  
Audit Commission (2002b) Mainstreaming Neighbourhood Renewal Public Sector handbook London Audit Commission

<sup>13</sup> ODPM (2003) National Evaluation of New Deal for Communities London ODPM

- Demands of centrally driven performance targets
- NDCs worried about achieving their own spend, and as a result bending main programmes coming second
- Challenge/threat to professionals/middle managers
- Short supply of evidence about 'will it work'.

As is shown in the local responses set out later in this report, set members experienced some of these challenges, but have also been able to move forward positively with actions that promote mainstreaming, and strategic mainstreaming in particular.

The evidence, therefore is that mainstreaming and joining up has been hard to do. The absence of integrated working is long-standing, culturally embedded, and deeply entrenched in central and local government<sup>14</sup>. It is against this background that current policies are directed and that LSPs aim to change the pattern of resource allocation. The current evidence is that whilst progress is slow, changed behaviour is beginning to emerge, and that in practice there are opportunities to realign resources beyond what many stakeholders currently perceive. This is particularly the case where mainstreaming is interpreted as the realignment of resources, and where such realignment encompasses all forms of shared or joint resourcing across the widest spectrum of activities.

## **Flexibilities and pooling resources**

Joint resourcing, therefore, can be an important means of developing or implementing strategic mainstreaming.

The work of the set has recognised a spectrum of approaches to joint resourcing ranging from aligning to pooling resources, and from resources in general (including people and facilities) to budgets in particular. For example, resources can be aligned through co-ordinated planning that ensures that partners are complementing each other's activities and addressing shared priorities. Resources may be pooled through the allocation of staff to joint teams or co-location of teams, without the pooling of budgets. Pooling of budgets may be required to enable the development of integrated services or more flexible services. Further examples are given in the following table.

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<sup>14</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (2000b) *Joining It Up Locally* Volume II, Report of Policy Action Team 17. London DTLR. P 27.

<b>Type of joint resourcing</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Aligning resources	<p><i>Through planning:</i>                      Co-ordination of planning across partner agencies                      Targeting funding from different agencies on the same neighbourhoods                      Lead or joint commissioning of related services</p> <p><i>At service delivery level:</i>                      Co-location of services                      Front-line staff operating in a mutually-reinforcing way at neighbourhood level</p>
Pooling non-financial resources	<p>Time spent on partnership or inter-agency groups                      Information sharing                      Different partners providing different elements in combination to provide a service (e.g. leisure and youth services working together)                      Secondment of staff to projects or multi-disciplinary teams                      Shared use of facilities or equipment</p>
Joint funding	<p>Jointly funded posts                      Jointly funded equipment stores                      Contributions to specific activities – with funds managed by one agency.</p>
Pooling budgets	<p>Health Act flexibilities – registered pooled budgets                      Children’s Trust pilots</p>

There are a number of potential barriers at local level to joint resourcing, many of which are explored in later sections. Research undertaken in parallel with the set’s discussions<sup>15 16</sup> has also shown that there are still perceptions locally that central government is focused on “vertical” structures and processes, and that there has been a lack of appropriate signals from the centre to public bodies about the need to work in a coordinated way with partners to meet local needs. However, Government has set out its intention to support local strategic partnerships and individual public sector bodies by removing where possible the barriers to pooling resources, and work undertaken by the national roundtable has recently drawn together a summary of the very extensive flexibilities already available to LSPs<sup>17</sup>, which we understand is shortly to be published in the form of a briefing for LSPs.

<sup>15</sup> A review of government guidance to the public sector on pooling budgets, Hamer L, HDA, 2002 (unpublished)

<sup>16</sup> Public Bodies Research, Local Strategic Partnerships: National Evaluation (unpublished)

<sup>17</sup> Pooling resources across sectors: a report for local strategic partnerships, HDA, September 2003 (soon to be published)

## **Pooled budgets**

Over the last three years or so, there has been a particular focus on enabling pooling of budgets. A pooled budget is defined as follows:

The **key features of pooled budgets** are that they provide:

- Flexibility in the way funds can be used
- Shared responsibility for delivering the outcomes, including responsibility for working effectively together
- Clear responsibility for the individual budgets that fund combined activities; and
- A clear understanding of the relationship between those contributing to the budget, if necessary through written protocols or memoranda of understanding.<sup>18</sup>

The **aim of a pooled budget** is to achieve flexibility in the use of funds, and other resources, brought together by partners and placed in a discrete fund in order to meet the common community or corporate objectives i.e. the needs of an identified group of people. The size of the pool will be set by the partners on the basis of agreed aims and outcomes and its use defined in terms of the commodities, goods, services, works and assets identified by the partnership.

The key principle of this arrangement is that regardless of the size contribution a Best Value authority or their partner(s) commit to a pool, the resource is then unified and available to provide agreed 'services'. Expenditure is thus based on the needs of the partnership and its users, and not on the level of contribution from each partner. This gives pooled budgets a special flexibility, whilst still operating within aims and outcomes agreed between the parties.

The pooled fund could be hosted and managed by a Best Value authority or by one of its partners, or it could be hosted by any of them. It could also be managed on their behalf by another body contracted to do so, whether from the public, private or voluntary sectors. Pooled budgets would not absolve Best Value authorities and other public bodies involved in a partnership from their statutory responsibilities but should provide a way of discharging them more flexibly.

In establishing a pooled budget, the sponsoring Best Value authority(ies) and their partners would be jointly responsible for setting the objectives of the pool, for ensuring that satisfactory financial controls are in place and for monitoring..... The framework for the financial management, accountability and audit of the pooled budget would mean that the ultimate accountability for the pooled budget flows back directly to each partners' existing financial accountability arrangements.

The 'host' would send regular monitoring reports and at the year end prepare a memorandum of accounts within their own statement of accounts which shows what has been received, spent and what remains in the pooled budget. This memorandum of accounts would be sent to each of the partners at the year's end for inclusion in their own statement of accounts. Although the 'host' would provide the financial administrative systems on behalf of the partners, it will not incur any additional liabilities except those that relate to the management of the budget.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Wiring It Up, Performance and Innovation Unit, 2000

<sup>19</sup> Excerpt from Working with others to achieve Best Value (Sharing Public Resources). DETR (2001) <http://www.local-regions.odpm.gov.uk/consult/bestvalue/11.htm>

The Health Act 1999 provides powers to support the integration of functions:

- Pooled funds - the ability for partners each to contribute agreed funds to a single pot, to be spent on agreed projects for designated services
- Lead commissioning - the partners can agree to delegate commissioning of a service to one lead organisation
- Integrated provision - the partners can join together their staff, resources, and management structures to integrate the provision of a service from managerial level to the front line.

Funds may be transferred between health and local authorities and the voluntary sector.

A pooled fund arrangement provides an opportunity for the partners to bring money together, in a discrete fund, to pay for the services that are an agreed part of the pooled fund arrangement for the client group who are to benefit from one or all of the services. Instead of users being inconvenienced by disputes about health and local authority responsibilities, organisations will agree at the outset the range of health and local government services to be purchased and provided from a pooled fund.

Regardless of what contributions NHS bodies or local authority(ies) commit to the pool, the pooled resource can be used on the agreed services as set out in the partnership arrangement. This will mean that the expenditure will be based on the needs of the users, and not on the level of contribution from each partner. This gives pooled budgets a unique flexibility, whilst being bounded by agreed aims and outcomes.

The aim is to enable partners to join together to design and deliver services around the needs of users rather than worrying about the boundaries of their organisations. These arrangements should help eliminate unnecessary gaps and duplications between services.<sup>20</sup>

A Joint Unit in DoH supports the exercise of these flexibilities, and there is a checklist of guidance for using the Act's flexibilities<sup>21</sup>. Use of the arrangements must be notified to DoH and there are currently some 200 examples on the relevant web-site<sup>22</sup>, illustrating a wide range of joint initiatives.

These definitions of pooled budgets assume that the host manager provides reports on use of funds, and that ultimate accountability for the pooled budget flows back into each partner's existing financial accountability arrangements. In this sense, funds contributed to the pooled budget remain "tagged".

The set recognised that a number of pooled budgets have been implemented (for example joint equipment stores and delayed discharges) and that much may be achieved by budgets pooled in

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<sup>20</sup> Health Act 1999 – Guidance on Section 31 Partnership Arrangements, Department of Health

<sup>21</sup> [www.doh.gov.uk/jointunit/notifications.pdf](http://www.doh.gov.uk/jointunit/notifications.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.doh.gov.uk/jointunit/notifications.pdf>

this way (as evidenced by the pooled budget arrangements registered under the Health Act Flexibilities).

The set also noted that a “genuinely” pooled budget would have the following features:

- Pooled for a clear purpose
- Joint responsibility for under/overspend
- Money pooled loses its “tag”.

This last feature would mean that new governance, management and administration arrangements would be needed, effectively creating a new public service organisation. This option – perhaps illustrated by Care Trusts - creates new boundaries with other services and therefore potentially new rigidities. Since the purpose of pooling is often to enable more flexible use of resources, in each case the balance of advantage of different approaches to joint resourcing needs to be considered.

## **Clarifying concepts and terminology**

To summarise, the set adopted the following conceptual and terminological framework.

The ultimate objective is about achieving improved outcomes reflecting community priorities. This requires strategic mainstreaming - the refocusing of mainstream programmes (and mainstream funding) onto agreed, shared targets, reflecting the pattern of local needs - which can be developed through bottom-up mainstreaming and a range of other means, including joint resourcing, of which a pooled budget is a particular example.

### 3. Local responses

Faced with a range of motivations for mainstreaming and a range of potential approaches, local decision makers respond depending on their own position within the resource system. The learning set identified three elements of this resource system which affect the local response:

- The **stage** in the resource system which they operate, principally planning/commissioning, service delivery, or monitoring and review.
- The **level** held within the organisational hierarchy – elected members/board level, chief officers, middle managers and front line staff each have differing responsibilities within the resource system and different possibilities for changing it.
- The **extent** of the geographical space at which they operate from region to county to city or district and to small area or neighbourhood.

These elements are of course over-lapping, but this framework is a helpful backcloth to analysis of the barriers to be overcome, and the catalysts to strategic mainstreaming which might be relevant in particular circumstances.

#### Barriers to mainstreaming and aligning resources

There is a widespread view that barriers stem from the limits which central government places on local discretion, and that the possibilities for using resources in different ways are limited. This was only partly borne out by the set's discussions.

The set did identify some specific issues about the mechanics of pooling resources. Notable among these are:

- The different VAT regimes operating between local government and health.

Local authorities and NHS bodies are governed by different VAT regimes. Local authorities can reclaim from Customs the VAT they incur in carrying out their statutory duties. NHS bodies, treated as government departments for VAT purposes, get refunds of tax on their contracted out services from Customs, but are recompensed through their funding for the VAT which cannot be reclaimed. The effect in financial terms is the same but in the new partnership situation it is important that participants are clear as to which VAT regime is governing their activity.

The leading or co-ordinating agency in any partnership notified under the Health Act 1999 will determine which VAT regime will apply. The lead agency will use their VAT regime for the partnership arrangement. The important principle is that the partnership will be established for co-ordinating services to users, and therefore will be sited in the place best able to take the lead in this. Partnerships **must not** be designed in order to avoid tax. EL(97)70 which outlaws tax avoidance within the NHS continues to govern the position.<sup>23</sup>

- Financial reporting regimes – the requirement for completion of government forms – which make it hard genuinely to “untag” budgets, for example education budgets

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<sup>23</sup> Guidance on the Health Act Section 31 Partnership Arrangements, DETR, DfEE, DoH

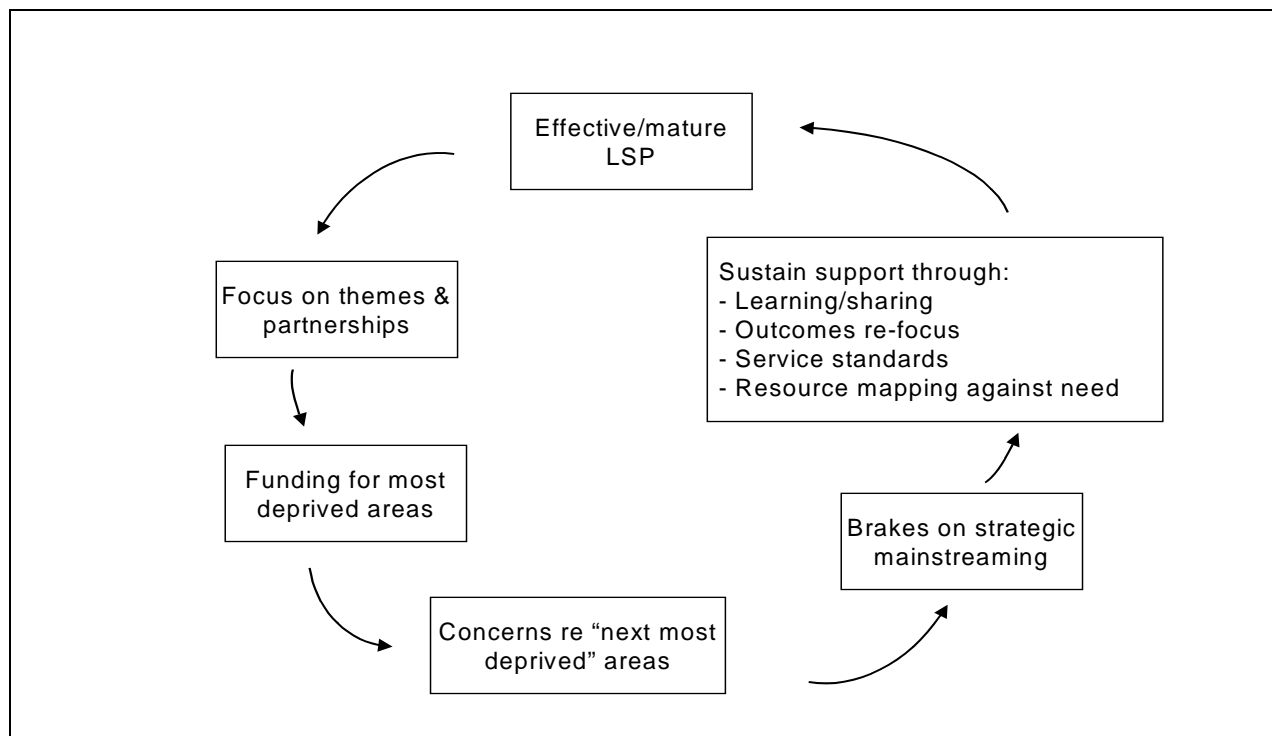
- Differences across service providers in pension arrangements (and pension transferability issues), human resources regimes, appraisals and salaries. The YOT experience has provided examples of these issues
- Lack of initial data about distribution of spending, of activities and of users' needs, by neighbourhood – for resource mapping. Resource mapping needs to cover the whole locality, not just target neighbourhoods, to enable relative levels of access to services to be assessed and as a basis for exploring the potential for re-allocating mainstream funding. However, the set identified a range of concerns about the feasibility of mapping across agencies in practice and monitored latest developments.<sup>24</sup> Identified issues relate to technical management accounting aspects of recording expenditure, difficulties in allocating joint costs to specific areas or activities, and political reluctance to make explicit the fact that particular areas receive less or more than neighbouring ones

Most of these technical issues can, however, be worked round. The majority of the barriers identified in the set's research and discussions in fact related to organisational cultures and the perspectives of individuals at different levels in organisations. These barriers need to be worked through. In relation to working through local cultural barriers, pace is an issue: going too fast can store up problems later (for example, language may be used by different partners to mean different things and this needs to be revealed and explored through taking the time to have detailed discussions).

Perspectives of elected members/board members and middle managers can be particularly significant. Councils have embraced the community leadership role, but this creates pressure for "branding" so that the council feels it is establishing its organisational identity with local communities. This need for identity can raise tensions within LSPs, and more specifically can highlight the concerns of some elected councillors about the legitimacy of the LSP. Some politicians can also be concerned about loss of control of budgets, about de-prioritising current services or about shifting the balance from universal services (such as cleansing/refuse collection) to targeted services. Rapid progress with strategic mainstreaming through LSP activity can reinforce these concerns, which may need to be addressed in localities, as illustrated in the following diagram.

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<sup>24</sup> For a discussion about the possibilities of mapping see [www.renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net).



In the cycle illustrated in the diagram, an effective LSP identifies the key themes on which it wishes to focus and the structural arrangements through which it might pursue these. The funding which becomes available for or is targeted on its deprived neighbourhoods/area, or for specific ABIs, begins to raise concerns about the other parts of the locality which do not receive such special treatment. This raises political tension and can be a disincentive to strategic mainstreaming. Where some groups/areas have had special attention it is argued that they do not need main programme attention. Indeed, in some areas there is evidence that the existence of an ABI, such as New Deal for Communities, allows agencies or the local authority to divert resources from priority areas (reverse bending). The consequence is that the effective LSP must sustain its commitment to, and support for, mainstreaming through learning and sharing, through re-focussing on outcomes, through review of service standards, and through resource mapping against need.

The perspectives of middle managers are also significant, since they can be particularly affected by mainstreaming and joint resourcing. The impact of changes are often felt strongly by, for example, budget managers or by senior professionals whose career paths are affected by the pressure to abandon their silos and move towards cross-agency working and joint resourcing which may threaten professional and managerial areas of autonomy. In the view of the learning set it is notable that the influence of central government has been strongest at the strategic end of the process (in establishing local strategic partnerships, in requiring plans, and in setting broad objectives) and at the delivery end of the process (in establishing special initiatives which produce one-off responses but ignore the mainstream). The world of middle management - the processes within and between organisations, where government policies are translated into programmes - has to a significant extent been ignored by policies to promote mainstreaming (although it is precisely on this group that silo driven pressures come most directly to bear). The

learning set recognises that the world of main programmes and their relationship to initiatives is crucially important.

## **Catalysts for mainstreaming and aligning resources**

Actions that will act as catalysts for strategic mainstreaming, or approaches that prove to be successful, will depend on local circumstances. From the experience of the set, there are however a number of recurring themes.

### **Leadership**

The role of individual leaders is critical to achieving the mainstreaming agenda. There is no substitute for enthusiasts in key leadership positions who are able to lead the necessary process of reflection across partners and to broker changes, or for senior level sign-up across the partner organisations. Without this, there will be difficulties in achieving a genuine common vision and middle managers will pick up on lack of commitment, leading to risk aversion in relation to developing new ways of using resources.

The set acknowledged that the first experience of mainstreaming will be culturally the hardest, and that it is helpful for this to be led at top level, and to be properly resourced. One relevant example is of chief executives working together to co-ordinate both programme-specific and mainstream resources to ensure maximum benefit in a deprived area.

#### **Croydon**

Since the establishment of the Local Strategic Partnership for Croydon in 2002, chief executives from the statutory, voluntary and business sectors have been meeting regularly to support the work of the partnership, oversee the development of the community strategy and provide collective leadership for partnership working to meet the strategy's aims. When the chief executives' group considered the neighbourhood renewal strategy for the borough, they agreed that it would be good to take one geographical area and see whether they could add value by working together in a coordinated way and using combined resources more strategically.

The two areas which were prioritised for the development of neighbourhood action plans (on the basis of their levels of deprivation) included NW Croydon, where the Chief Executive of the PCT chairs the SRB board. The Chief Executive of the PCT therefore volunteered to lead a project in NW Croydon to see whether a more coordinated approach to use of mainstream resources could be pursued, working with people in the area to make a real difference. There was strong chief executive support and a half day workshop brought together all the chief executives and chief officers from the statutory sector, plus business and voluntary sector colleagues. Simply sharing what they were all doing led to collaboration in a number of areas where partners had not previously been engaged or where activities were happening in parallel.

Next, an "Open Space" event brought together top and operational managers with a range of community leaders and led to further pieces of joint work and a developing sense of the priorities. The neighbourhood action plan is how they developed, which builds on the issues identified at these events, plus community consultation work and the local position against government floor targets. The intention is to have a plan

which delivers quick wins, but also tackles the long term strategic issues. A small amount of neighbourhood renewal funding will be used to deliver long term change: projects which must be supported by local communities and must either be short term investment to lever change in the mainstream or must have sponsors committed to long term sustainability of pilots.

The Council's Deputy Leader is sponsoring the plan within the Council and recently hosted a NW Croydon summit for councillors and chief officers to secure commitment. The plan is being developed and will be delivered through the NW Croydon inter-agency group a reconvened group of senior managers from across the sectors who can commit their organisations' resources and be clear about what is deliverable over what period of time. Government initiatives such as extended schools and the new GP contract are being integrated into the plan to maximise their benefit.

Leadership does not however always need to come consistently from the top. Other possible catalysts for change include:

- a small critical mass in key positions to lead the required changes
- a larger critical mass lower down agencies (change champions)
- external pressure for change (such as inspectorates or community activists).

Leadership roles and relationships are also more complex where boundaries are not co-terminous and in larger two-tier areas. In the latter case, the set heard about how external financial incentives have been used to identify immediate priorities across partners, in advance of development of a long-term vision.

### **Surrey – Local Public Service Agreement**

As for other non-NRU areas, the absence of funds to drive new work by the LSP was seen as a particular challenge in Surrey. The countywide LSP, which brings together the eleven districts and boroughs (and their LSPs) as well as countywide organisations including the county's five PCTs, was determined from its inception to be seen as a catalyst for new work in the county. The countywide LSP therefore looked to the Public Service Agreement (PSA) programme as a means to draw in some financial support for new work as well as generating substantial funds for future work (in the form of the potential reward grant made at the end of the three year PSA period).

Taking countywide and local LSP priorities as the basis for the elements of the PSA, the countywide community planning team at Surrey County Council (SCC) asked relevant existing partnerships (such as the Surrey Economic Partnership) to identify and develop appropriate projects that would:

- fit within a PSA (in terms of having measurable, achievable outcome targets within a 3-year period);
- benefit from pump priming; and
- need to be delivered in partnership

The projects that have emerged typically feature improvements in the delivery of services by better joining up or co-ordination of delivery. Pump priming (approximately £150K will be available for each project) has been allocated to provide the means whereby this might be achieved.

Most important has been the discussion with respect to the distribution of reward on completion of the successful PSA. PSA reward is calculated on the basis of the budgets of the local authorities that take part. No account is taken in this calculation of the involvement of other partners. In Surrey the maximum potential reward available on completion of a successful PSA will be approximately £22 million (£19 million on the basis of SCC's budget and £3 million on the basis of the total of district and borough budgets). Clearly, because the projects require the contribution of several partners in securing the stretch target, it was important that their efforts were also recognised. Several options were available such as:

- That the reward would be divided up between the 12 LSPs using an agreed formula. This was turned down because the LSPs are not legally constituted to hold funds.
- That the reward would be held by SCC and the districts and boroughs but ring fenced for future use by the LSPs. This was turned down because of the complexity of administration, the burden it placed on local authority partners and because it offered no direct incentive to partner organisations.
- That the reward would be divided between all partner organisations proportionately to their contribution to the achievement of the stretch target. This was the agreed approach. Whilst this will be complex to measure and manage, it was felt that this was the fairest and most manageable of the options available.

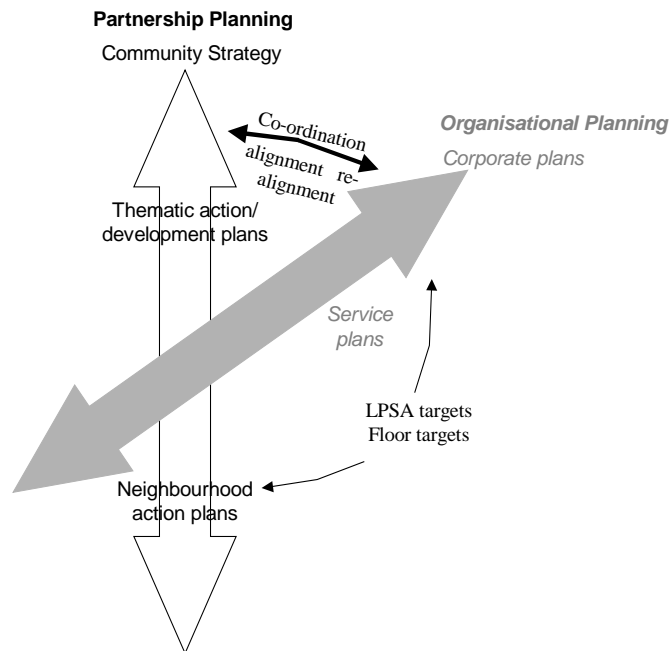
The arrangement provides considerable incentive to partner organisations to ensure delivery of their role/s in relevant projects. There is also an understanding that partner organisations may ring fence the reward they receive to contribute to future partnership work.

The Surrey partnership PSA will be negotiated with ODPM in early 2004 for implementation in April 2004.

## **Aligning planning**

Many of the LSPs represented in the set were engaged in work to align their planning processes, to enable resources to be more effectively allocated, or re-allocated, to respond to community planning priorities. Without this work, there is a risk that resources are only re-allocated at the margins, and strategic mainstreaming is not achieved.

The following diagram seeks to highlight the planning processes taking place in different areas. Localities have established a partnership planning process that implements the community strategy, typically through thematic action plans, and with links to neighbourhood action plans. At the same time, organisational planning – corporate plans and service or business plans – has been continuing much as before. The focus of current developments must be to improve alignment of the two strands of planning – strategic community planning and agency corporate planning, thereby reducing any duplication of activity and improving the targeting of resources. This is illustrated in the diagram below. At the top it means the alignment of objectives, the sharing of targets where possible, and the development of consistency between the aspirations of the community strategy and the corporate or business plans of the partner agencies. From the bottom up, it means ensuring that initiatives within neighbourhood action plans are resourced through joint and flexible arrangements linking the appropriate agencies (e.g. sharing staff, joint use of premises or equipment, shared information systems) and contributing to LPSA targets and service floor targets.



The set noted that the growth of partnership planning activities is accompanied by more local flexibility about the number and style of service-related plans. ODPM announced a significant rationalisation in compulsory plans in July 2003, leaving local bodies more freedom to decide what plans they need. Most local choice about plans and formats is however available to the best performing authorities in CPA terms and there is a risk that this will inhibit partnerships involving less good authorities from progressing alignment of planning across partners.

From comparing and contrasting experiences, issues arising in relation to planning processes are:

- How communities of need/interest are taken into account in these processes. There are communities with shared needs who may not be geographically clustered in specific neighbourhoods, and may not be captured by the top level themes
- The relationship between “top down” and “bottom up” planning. How are different local needs reflected in top down themes? Do partners have different perceptions of the themes – has the consultation and involvement built deep ownership and understanding about what themes mean for different groups? How does top-down planning tell a story that will engage diverse neighbourhoods and communities?
- Recognition that there are genuine tensions (or perceived tensions) between whole locality priorities (e.g. health improvement) and the priorities of neighbourhoods (e.g. cleansing or liveability). All planning processes need to be able to resolve tensions and decide priorities in some way. Critically - how are specific decisions reached that can be translated into resource allocation and action?

### **Joint planning in Wakefield**

The Wakefield District Partnership published its Community Strategy *Fast Forward* in summer 2003. A process of developing annual Joint Action Plans was subsequently started to align activities to the Community Strategy framework. To be most effective, it was recognized that these plans need to dovetail with the different policy, planning and delivery processes of partners.

As part of the action research and in the context of the wider local evaluation of the Wakefield LSP, a survey of Wakefield District LSP member organisations and three more detailed case studies of key partners were undertaken.

This process reinforced a number of shared findings across the set, including:

- success in establishing a shared vision across partners, with a tendency also for different organisations to emphasise the elements that are most closely linked to their specific remit;
- the wide range of consultation mechanisms in use, and the scope for exploring possibilities for rationalisation of mechanisms and better shared utilisation of findings;
- the need to spend time on sharing cultures and building capacity for partnership working through sharing priorities and challenges faced by partners, different expectations, planning cycles, budgets and decision making processes;
- the role that conflicts between competing service and partnership work priorities can play in reducing the impact of joint working intentions (see section below);
- the importance of involving non-statutory bodies in planning;
- the need to manage both the broad and inclusive nature of Strategic Partnerships, and roles of different types of organisations within LSPs, and arrangements for detailed action planning between partners;
- the negative impact that changes in personnel can have on day to day partnership working;
- the benefits of a focus on some "early wins" and of collaborative evaluations.

Specific activities pursued to help the partners in Wakefield to move forward together include:

- mapping of timelines for strategic planning and budget allocation across partner organisations,
- mapping of consultation mechanisms,
- joint action plans with clear shared responsibilities for delivery,
- the Community Engagement Framework used by the council which has been adopted more widely by the LSP and provides a consistent framework for all partners working to deliver the community strategy,
- establishment of theme groups to work on community strategy themes, using a shared toolkit for developing joint action plans,
- joint planning groups to address issues which need to be resolved in order to deliver joint action plans,
- a partner conference to consider, among other things, the dependencies and linkages in a joint planning cycle.

Within the Council, there are in-house developments which are also supporting joint planning. One example is the work within the authority to develop internal engagement to support new corporate and business planning processes: a consultative group considers changes to the process and reports to the Corporate Management Team. Representatives from the key LSP partners have been included in the group.

### **Tameside**

In Tameside, eight thematic partnerships have been established, and given responsibility to deliver against the themes of the community strategy which was led by the LSP. These thematic partnerships cover community cohesion, children and young people, lifelong learning, crime and disorder, health, housing, economic, and community legal services). The thematic partnerships have agreed to sign formal agreements with the LSP partnership board specifying the aims and measures they will work on. At this thematic level, good progress is therefore being made on strategic mainstreaming

The first round of NRF was focused in this locality on area-based initiatives, involving regeneration partnerships, in the most deprived areas. For the next round (2004-2006) more emphasis will be placed on using NRF funding for work through the thematic partnerships. One of the aims is to use this funding to act as a catalyst to improve mainstream services: the need to further strengthen the links between mainstream service planning and the focus on the most deprived communities has been recognised.

### **Performance management**

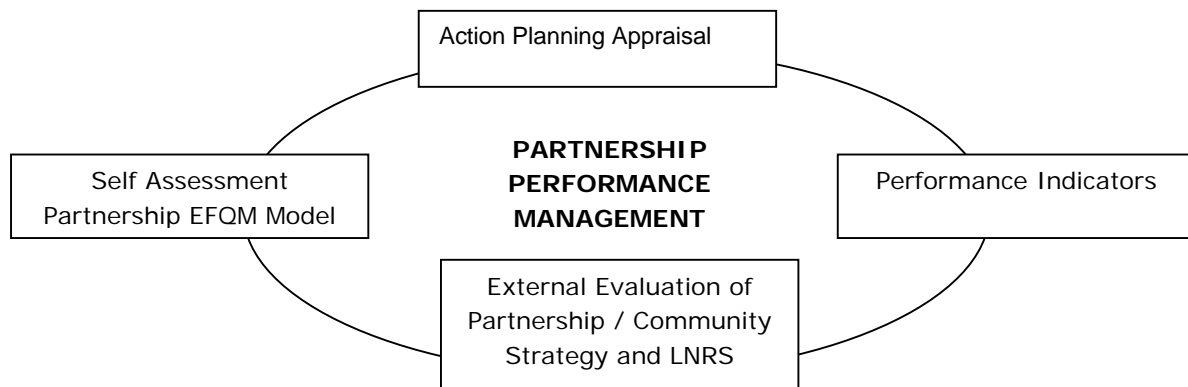
Aligning of planning and resources is a first step, but this needs to be part of a performance management system if plans are to be translated into action on the ground and lessons are to be learnt through monitoring and review.

A parallel action learning set focused specifically on performance management, for which there is a separate briefing paper. Discussion in this set emphasised the need for the LSP to select a few indicators of priority outcomes (perhaps quality of life indicators) and for clarity about how different agencies will contribute to these LSP priorities. This requires an understanding of the hierarchy of cross-service and service PIs, and of short term and long term indicators. Agencies can then monitor short term indicators that are expected to have an impact in the medium/longer term on LSP priority outcomes. This needs to be a critical process – based on research evidence of what interventions have an impact on what outcomes – to avoid all existing activities being claimed as contributing to LSP outcomes (and therefore no reallocation of resources to priorities).

### Performance Management Framework for Wakefield District Partnership

In line with recent national guidance, Wakefield District Partnership (WDP) is currently developing a Performance Management Framework to assess and monitor the delivery process of the WDP and review its effectiveness as a partnership.

The WDP has adopted the following model comprising four elements to ensure a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to managing its performance:



#### *Action Plan Appraisal*

The development of Joint Action Plans is an annual process of aligning the key actions of partners to address the priorities set out in each challenge of the Community Strategy. This process incorporates appraisal techniques such as the 'Fast Forward Toolkit' which will be used to ensure the actions in the plans adhere to the principles set out in the Strategy. The process of aligning the Joint Action Plan process with other partner planning cycles is currently underway.

#### *Performance Indicators*

The Community Strategy suggests examples of performance indicators under each of the Challenges. These are based on Quality of Life Indicators suggested by the Audit Commission and also on more locally relevant measures. This framework of indicators will be developed annually in conjunction with the Joint Action Plan.

#### *Self Assessment*

WDP are currently in the process of developing a locally relevant self-assessment tool known as the 'Wakefield District Partnership Driver'. This is based on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model.

#### *External Evaluation*

An external body will undertake an evaluation of the whole programme and the effectiveness of the Wakefield District Partnership and Community Strategy. This will incorporate an analysis based on impacts at a specific point in the delivery of the programme and also an ongoing 'longitudinal' analysis of impacts.

## **Bottom-up/levering change in the mainstream**

The role of pump priming funding in oiling the wheels of partnership working and providing opportunities to learn about new ways of pooling resources and working together has been recognised above.

Where funds are targeted at particular neighbourhoods, there can be practical challenges and opportunities in using this funding to lever strategic mainstreaming. For example:

- For various reasons of history and time/resource pressures, early NRF funding in many localities has led to an SRB-type bidding process. This bidding culture is embedded from previous practice across the country.
- Evaluation of short-term funding/initiatives needs to focus not just on the impact of the specific project, but more importantly on the impact it has on mainstream policy, practice and resourcing.
- Neighbourhoods are understandably anxious for results in the short term, which can militate against the processes and time needed to engage with service managers and to influence the mainstream, and can result in some dissonance between the programmes of different partners.
- There is a need to promote engagement between communities (or at least community leaders and activists) and the professionals – to enable dialogue about needs and ways of meeting them. These engagement activities need to be carefully designed and planned, and there are a range of potential approaches and examples.

### **Croydon**

(See also above under Leadership)

Under the auspices of the LSP, a small steering group is leading work focusing on North West Croydon, an area of relative deprivation. Following a chief executives' event, at which there was mapping of priorities and services and exchange of information, an open space event with the community took place. This open space event (*Making a difference in NW Croydon*) had a range of results – a mix of identification of strategic themes (strategic mainstreaming) and identification of smaller developments to implement on the patch.

- Neighbourhood managers can be important through their role in co-ordinating, communicating and promoting.
- Neighbourhood commissioning can help to create new markets for provision and encourage traditional providers to develop new approaches (e.g. through the Learning and Skill Council's Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities funds).

If targeted funds are not to have the perverse impact of delaying cultural change by enabling partners to defer addressing difficult decisions, it is important that the approach is carefully thought through and developed locally.

### **Kirklees**

In the first round of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (2001-2004), Kirklees adopted an approach which included Neighbourhood Renewal Steering Groups for each of the 10 target neighbourhoods. These steering groups comprised community representatives and key service providers, in a model in which commissioning was seen as a key principle. A small central reserve for cross-cutting themes was also established. In addition, 'People's Purses' (minor grants for community groups) have been established which have been used to enable community engagement, to support local voluntary groups and to enable 'quick wins'. A dedicated Neighbourhood Team was not established until September 2002

This approach was assessed locally to have been partially successful in helping some communities and service providers to work together on local priorities, in beginning to move away from the existing SRB bidding culture towards developing the commissioning role of the neighbourhood steering groups, in engaging the Area Committees in the process, and in using NRF funding to support activities valued by target communities (such as more neighbourhood wardens, more community beat officers, and more activities for young people). However, with a few notable exceptions, the interventions being generated at a neighbourhood level were single service focussed, small scale- in terms of cost and impact, and with limited commitment from services with regard to sustainability. Overall, it was also felt that there had not been success in generating groundbreaking ideas that would also transform mainstream delivery, be mainstreamed and would benefit other neighbourhoods as well as the most deprived ones.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Decision Making Panel therefore considered options for further developing the local approach, based on the learning from local experience. As a result, for the next round of NRF, there will be less emphasis on projects and bidding, and more emphasis on engagement with strategic managers via a theme-based approach, which will help to lever change in the mainstream. Local NR Steering Groups will continue to be at the heart of the process but instead of being expected to develop interventions will focus on defining desired local outcomes, helping services shape interventions and providing local input into the monitoring and evaluation of interventions. This approach will preserve some flexible neighbourhood funds such as the 'People's Purse', but also allow for more investment in more ambitious cross-cutting developments, linked to floor targets and key themes, LPSAs and involving major services. The identified way forward also emphasises involvement of LSP partners, involvement and engagement of service managers at a senior more strategic level, and further developing dialogue between service providers and the communities they serve.

The new approach is underway and Kirklees have already seen greater commitment from services to engage more effectively, resulting in more cross cutting proposals being approved, such as a Persistent Offenders Initiative, Mobile CCTV (targeting crime and anti social behaviour hotspots), and a pilot text message service providing advice or information to young people.

## **Pooling resources**

In the context of partnership working where common objectives to meet the needs of deprived communities and inter-related performance indicators have been identified, more efficient and flexible use of resources can be achieved by creative combinations of joint resourcing. Involving partnership working across statutory and voluntary agencies, and through virtual teams, major improvements in access to services can be achieved (and perhaps faster) without the need for formal pooled budgets.

### **Devon**

As part of its response to Department of Health guidance on fairer charging, Devon County Council has undertaken an exercise, with partners, to re-think methods of charging for home care and other non-residential services to ensure they are consistent and equitable.

The key principles were to:

- Seek to maintain (not increase or reduce) the amount of money coming into Devon Social Services from charges for non-residential services.
- Adopt a fair and consistent approach across all adult user groups and not treat people differently because of age, gender or disability.
- Charge for all non-residential services received in a care package arranged or provided by Devon Social Services.
- Charge individuals the standard cost of services unless a financial assessment shows otherwise.
- Provide information, advice and alternative options to individuals to maximise their personal income and choice over services.

As a key result of this exercise, to ensure that everybody pays a fair charge and to check that everyone is already claiming any full state benefit to which they may be entitled, a new joint agency finance and benefits assessment (FAB) team has been set up.

Devon, at the time of writing, is the only local authority area in the country which has established a statutory / voluntary sector partnership operational Finance and Benefits Team in order to implement Fairer Charging.

The FAB Team is made up of:

- Department of Work and Pensions, Pension Service, home visiting officers based in local Pension Service offices.
- CAB home visiting officers (based in and employed by local Citizens Advice Bureaux across Devon).
- Devon Welfare Rights Unit, which is a project of the Citizens Advice Service and provides a development, training, consultancy and support role for visiting officers.
- CARE Direct Devon, which provides an operational project management role and acts as a central client referral and co-ordination point.
- Devon Social Services Client Financial Services Staff who carry statutory responsibility for financial policy matters; for final decisions on and notification to clients on individual client charges and for administration and collection of charges payable.

The visiting officers of the FAB Team work to operational guidance jointly compiled by: Devon Welfare Rights Unit, Devon County Council, The Pension Service and CARE Direct Devon.

This work has been progressed under the auspices of the LSP and its access to benefits subgroup. The FAB team operates as a virtual team, and formal pooling of budgets has not taken place.

## 4. Conclusions

The set concluded that the key first order questions to be asked about strategic mainstreaming are:

- Is there a shared vision?
- Are there shared objectives?
- Are there shared targets?
- Is performance management in place to monitor activities towards agreed performance indications and achieve agreed targets?
- Are resources deployed to meet targets?

### Role of the LSP

The LSP has a number of roles in enabling these questions to be answered positively:

- **Collection and pooling of information on patterns of resource use.** This is about mapping needs and current performance (including performance against targets) and is part of the process of ensuring there is shared language and understanding of issues, as a basis for setting priorities.
- **Developing a shared vision and identifying priorities for community outcomes.**
- **Strategic review of options for realignment of resources.** In the context of the shared vision and identified priorities, a strategic review of options for mainstreaming is needed. This may be supported by aligning planning processes, but in any event includes
  - identifying targets for re-allocation of mainstream resources
  - identifying what aspects of which services will need to be more integrated/flexible, and to what extent
  - identifying what types of joint resourcing are needed to support different proposed developments
  - giving permission for these developments to be pursued
- **Facilitation of change,** including diagnostic consideration about partners' individual and shared capacity (e.g. leadership capacity and experience of joint resourcing), setting a realistic pace for change and identification of what will be needed to achieve the selected new ways of working in terms of
  - Culture – new forms of accountability and mutual challenge, negotiating “winners and losers” when aims are not exactly the same
  - Support and capacity building for managers and staff
- **Learning and dissemination of results** across partners

- **Reconciliation of tensions** between individual organisational accountabilities and collective responsibilities to LSP, and unblocking when tensions arise.

These roles reflect the fact that this is a cyclical and risk management process: localities will not achieve all potential changes first time round, rather they will make further progress with each iteration; and moving forward requires juggling of a number of different factors, with the need to recognise that this may be vulnerable to unanticipated shocks or crises.

## **National roles**

National roles are also of great importance in exerting external influence, which needs to continue to be balanced between pressures and incentives - 'sticks and carrots'.

One influential pressure for change is the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of local authorities, as developed by the Audit Commission and implemented from 2002, which requires local authorities to work in partnership to achieve community outcomes. Other incentives, such as LPSA rewards and freedoms from specific planning requirements, are also identified by the set as positive developments.

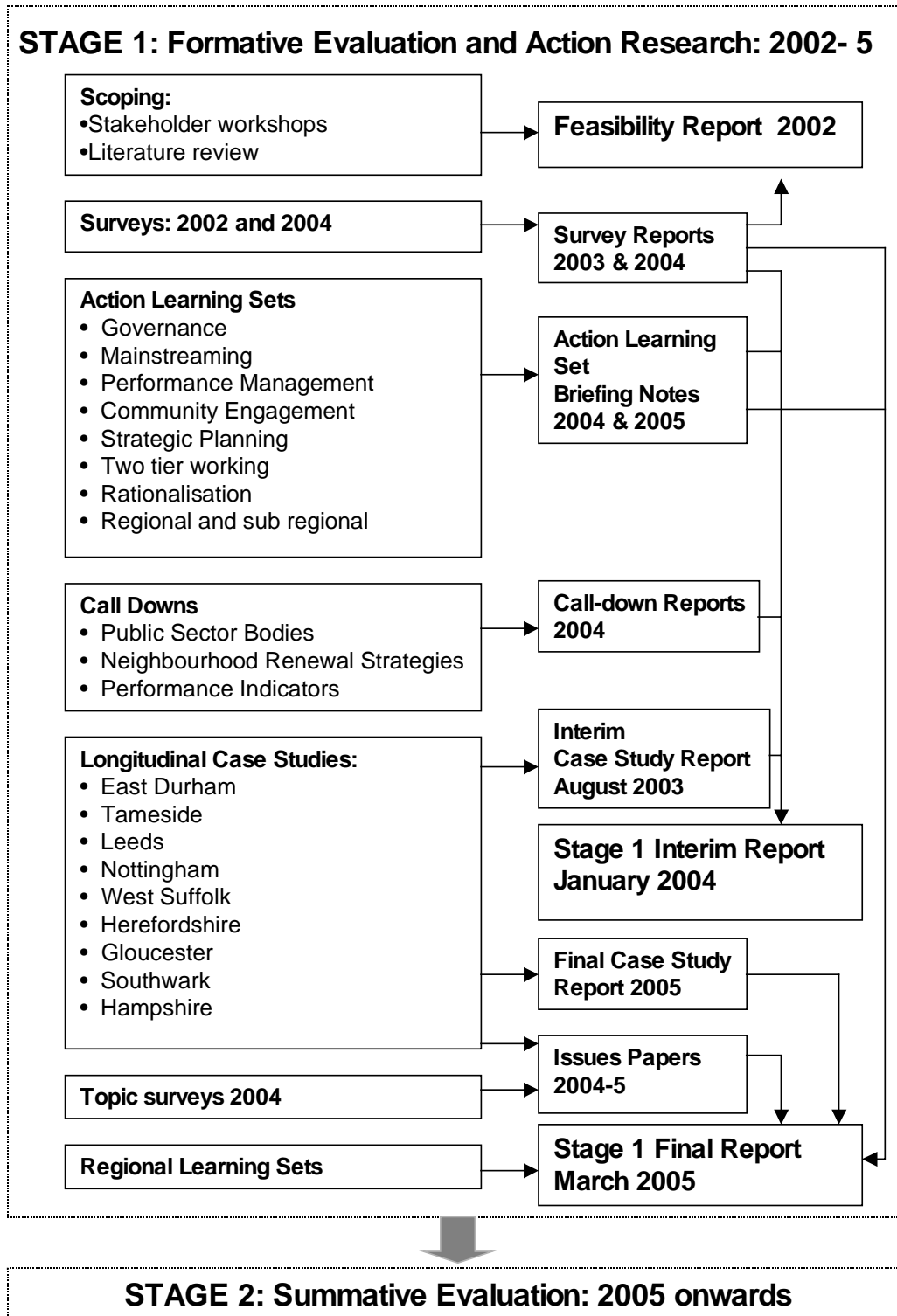
In terms of addressing one of the key levels at which mainstreaming needs to be developed – middle management – current national initiatives in capacity building and cross-sector management development will be important.

Imposition of pooled budgets is not regarded by the set as helpful. Local decisions need to be taken about whether joint resourcing is needed and, if so, of what type.

## **Learning and the pace of change**

The conclusion of this action learning set on mainstreaming and aligning resources is that the issue of mainstreaming is on the agenda across the country. There is progress and learning at local level. The pace may be slow initially, but this can be expected to accelerate as a result of spreading of experience and as partnership working becomes the 'day job' for managers across services. Mainstreaming of partnership working in organisational systems and personnel systems will also help.

## Appendix 1: Overview of the Evaluation



## **Appendix 2: List of action research topics in the programme**

### **Spring-autumn 2003**

Performance management

Mainstreaming: aligning and pooling resources

Strategic planning and delivery: making partnership working effective

Community engagement

Governance

### **Autumn 2003- spring 2004**

Two tier working

Regional and sub-regional issues

Rationalisation of plans and partnerships