

# **LAAs - making community cohesion and equalities integral**

## **Challenge Question : a Resource for GOs**

*More inclusive, cohesive and engaged communities*<sup>1</sup> assist Local Area Agreements (LAAs) achieve outcomes across all four funding blocks. Understanding communities, their diversity and particular needs helps inform intelligent targeting of regional and local resources and enables the LAAs to integrate quality outcomes.

It is therefore important that GO staff involved in LAA negotiations fully understand the issues and are aware of departments' expectations in this respect. There are three overarching lines of enquiry in relation to LAAs:

- The extent to which they utilise intelligence on existing inequalities.
- The extent to which a wide range of communities of interest are involved in shaping the LAA, either through the formal structures of the VCS, or as individuals.
- The extent to which LAA outcomes and their associated indicators and targets reflect both inequalities and community cohesion imperatives.

This resource document sets out a check-list to give GOs an understanding of what departments involved with community engagement, community cohesion and equalities would expect to see in the final LAAs. It has been developed by a working group consisting of GOs, RCU, consultants, the Home Office, ODPM, DfES and DoH, focusing on community issues in LAAs. Much of the thinking is based on analysis of the first twenty-one LAAs.

The document is not intended to be a prescriptive template but rather a steer which GOs can adapt to their own circumstances.

Communities are the central beneficiaries of the many regional funds now being channelled via LAAs to local level. The PSAs set out by Departments for LAAs broadly aim to help tackle disadvantage and social exclusion, improve services and narrow the gaps in health, services for children and young people, safer and stronger communities and economic development (the four funding blocks). LAAs are therefore expected to demonstrate inclusion, engagement of diverse communities, a good understanding of the differences in current access and needs, community cohesion issues and show how these same communities will be involved in the process and continuous monitoring and service delivery associated with the LAAs.

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<sup>1</sup> GOWM's aide memoire document LAAs: Community inclusion and engagement

## Check-list – evidence of equalities, Community Cohesion and VCS in LAAs – lessons learnt from the first round of LAAs

### 1. Appreciation of diversity in the local context

- Good understanding of the local context and any social issues gathered by good community involvement and good data collection. Understanding of the makeup of the area and any particular issues around particular groups, their attitudes, experience, take up of service and needs. This knowledge of local areas will provide a perspective through which to evaluate LAAs. For example, in an area with a significant ethnic minority community, (although not exclusive to such areas) there will be an expectation that the Agreement will reflect this important demographic in its outcomes, indicators and targets.

### 2. Inclusivity (including VCS)

- Early involvement of communities via VCS, councillors, community representatives and LSPs, CENs and other partnerships. The VCS involved should be able to demonstrate broad membership and/or good links to the diverse community including 'hard to reach 'minority' groups.
- Evidence of continuous involvement of the above and not just at the start of LAA negotiations.
- Evidence of VCS, other groups and individuals from diverse sections of the community sitting on LAA steering groups, and participating in workshops and events etc including those representing BME, younger people, faith, gender, disability and other communities of interest, as opposed to just the large VCS consortia.
- Development of clear plans for achieving the VCS mandatory outcome. The LAA Guidance suggests each LAA should include a *statement of involvement* – indicating how the VCS are involved in the design and delivery of the Agreement and how this links to the infrastructure and capacity building activities. Compact principles should be applied with regional Compact Plus action plans setting out implementation milestones which enable assessment of progress and evaluation.
  - Where the local infrastructure of VCS is struggling to meet the LAA timetable or even reluctant to become involved, the LAA partnership should be supportive and encourage participation especially with the Changeup VCS consortia.
- Where VCS and others are engaged it would be helpful to break them down into groups by gender, race, faith, age, sexual orientation and disability etc to gauge representation levels. Statements of community involvement should indicate the extent to which diverse interests were actively involved.
- Where workshops and conferences are held or specific community involvement exercises, the LAA should record the diversity of participants, specifying what steps were taken to increase the range of participants.

- Clear plans showing involvement of VCS in service delivery. For instance, being awarded contracts for specific activities such as out-reach or community consultations.

#### Other measures of inclusivity

A number of targets involve direct participation of people in the community:

- satisfaction with services;
- satisfaction with the neighbourhood;
- perception of community cohesion;
- feel able to influence local decisions;
- fear of crime;
- perception of safety.

All of these measures should be gathered in such a way that they can be broken into the key social strands: gender, race (including Gypsies and travellers), disability, rural populations, age, faith and sexual orientation - to enable further targeting of resources as appropriate.

### 3. Empowerment of the community

- In connection with the above the LAA should provide indications of how they are empowering local people and giving them a greater voice to influence local decision making and delivery of services. This is a **Mandatory** LAA outcome.

### 4. Diversity in target setting

- General positive statements about diversity, VCS and Community Cohesion in the Agreement narrative need to be clearly evident within the targets themselves. They should be aspects of wider targets or substantive targets in their own right.
- The majority of bodies involved in LAAs are public bodies, and as such, they all have obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Specifically, whilst undertaking their role as stakeholders in LAAs, they need to be mindful of the General Duty under the Act which requires public bodies: to eliminate racial discrimination; to promote equal opportunities; and to promote good relations between different racial groups. As LAAs represent a new mechanism for channelling public resources in order to improve public services, how LAAs are drawn up and what they contain is relevant to the General Duty. Therefore, local authorities, other local public partners, and the GOs, (as well as ODPM as a whole and other government departments) have an obligation to comply with the Duty whilst executing their various roles related to LAAs. Ultimately, the response to this obligation should be reflected in LAA outcomes, indicators and targets.
- The race General Duty will be extended to disability in December 2006 and gender in 2007.
- Group specific targets to be apparent within the wider headline outcomes agreed in the LAA - ie indications of mainstreaming diversity and Community Cohesion within the wider framework. For example specific targets around access to health, education and good neighbourhoods, sports and recreation facilities, unemployment, crime

figures (including race hate) etc within different race and faith groups, and also age and gender groups within those race and faith groups.

- Community targets should be SMART, like other targets they should state who will be responsible for meeting them, and assigned a time frame.

## **5. Evidence of diversity/race impact assessments**

- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 referred to in section 4 above also requires public bodies to monitor the impact of what they do where it is relevant to the general duty as specified above. Therefore, LAA partners on the LSP need to set in place mechanisms to measure how the delivery of the LAA outcomes has contributed to the general duty. If there is concern as to whether this act is relevant to LSPs, GOs are directed to the Commission for Race Equality's publication, *Public authorities and partnerships: a guide to the duty to promote race equality*, (2004) which specifies LSPs (as well as crime reduction partnerships, health partnerships, etc.)
- The duty to monitor for racial impact will be extended to disability in December 2006 and gender in 2007.
- Plans to include minority group stakeholders in the monitoring of performance/outcomes during the LAA's three year life.

## **6. Healthier communities**

- The LAA guidance specifically mentions health as an integral part of the LAA. A key objective for the HCOP block is to improve health within disadvantaged areas and for disadvantaged groups. Tackling health inequalities is a crucial part of the LAA. There should be a particular focus on disadvantaged and socially excluded groups within a local area.
- Inequalities arising from differential needs or particular health issues in relation to gender, race (including Gypsies & Travellers), disability, faith, age and sexual orientation must be considered and in evidence during the development of the LAA.
- Research has shown that circulatory disease (including Coronary Heart Disease), respiratory disease and cancer account for the majority of the life expectancy gap between England as a whole and the most deprived areas within the country. Middle-aged and older people contribute the most to this life expectancy gap. The LAA should therefore focus on these groups and diseases.
- The *Local Area Agreements: A Prospectus* (July 2004) specifically mentions inequalities experienced by older people and it asks that disadvantaged groups be targeted. Outcomes for older people should relate to their independence, well-being and choice (as set out in the *Vision for Adult Social Care* green paper, and *Opportunity Age*, the government's strategy for an ageing society). In looking at older people's needs, these should include, 'needs arising from culture, religion, race and language'.

- In addition to this, there is a differential vulnerability to certain health conditions for other groups, for example, stroke and diabetes, by gender and race particularly. There is also evidence that certain populations are underrepresented in screening and other preventative activities such as smoking cessation sessions. Each LA should choose priorities for the LAA based on evidence, to tackle best health inequalities within the community. National statistics are available concerning differential vulnerability to particular health conditions and these should be assumed to apply to local regions unless there is evidence to the contrary.

## **7. Children and young people**

- Educational attainment levels, exclusions and other dimensions (being healthy, being safe, able to make a positive contribution and economic well-being) should be measured with reference to race (including Gypsies and Travellers), gender, disability, age and faith. There are differences in attitudes as well as behaviours between the groups and also towards the groups. For example, girls are much less likely to engage in sports activities outside school and so LAA indicators to improve participation in sports would need to recognise this disparity between girls and boys.
- Evidence of monitoring access of disabled children to schools of choice and social clubs etc and the introduction of person centred plans to meet disabled children's needs.
- Where there are anti-bullying programmes, racist bullying could be specifically identified or other forms of bullying related to disability, sexual orientation or faith.
- National statistics are available concerning differential performance in educational attainment of different ethnic and gender groups. These should be assumed to apply to local regions unless there is evidence to the contrary.

## **8. Safer and Stronger Communities**

- Measuring perceptions under 'reducing the fear of crime' should cover the key social strands: gender, race (including Gypsies and travellers), disability, age, faith and sexual orientation - to enable further targeting of resources as appropriate. For example indicators should reflect women's disproportionate fear of crime, particularly sexual assault.
- Evidence of engagement and empowerment of local minority groups in the SSC programme - their impact on decision making and on the delivery of services should be in evidence.
- Stronger communities will be cohesive communities; LSPs need to consider how their LAAs can promote community cohesion, where community cohesion is an issue.
- LAAs could include targets for disabled people to live with greater independence in their own homes.

- A paper from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit '*Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*' recommended that LAAs be used to pilot personalised budgets for disabled people. Are LAAs acting on this recommendation?

## **9. Economic Development and Enterprise**

- LAAs could include targets for helping people with disabilities back into work.
- Unemployment rates should include the relative differences between the key social strands: gender, race, disability, rural populations, age, faith and sexual orientation – and recognition of any economic barriers. Access to economic opportunities needs to be monitored over time.
- Transport access is an important consideration affecting all 4 blocks. Safe and reliable transport access for the old and the young (disproportionately women and girls) to education and health facilities and to recreation are important. LAAs should look at the findings from the Transport Accessibility Guidance.
- In major urban areas, where there are outcomes related to entrepreneurial growth and small businesses, as well as outcomes related to reducing business failures and company deformations, consideration should be given to indicators relevant to Black and Asian SMEs.

## **10. Community Cohesion and cross-cutting outcomes**

- Evidence of understanding of the link between improved Community Cohesion and stronger, safer communities in the Agreement. For example evidence of Community Cohesion targets or Community Cohesion plans eg measured changes of perception within particular groups over a set period, such as perceptions of harmony between local groups and perception of being able to influence local decision making as perceived by different groups. These latter two are part of the cross-cutting recommended outcomes contained on page 53 of the original LAA Guidance.
- Report any specific actions for targeted groups eg the setting up of a unit to deal with reported racism.
- Cross Cutting outcomes related to (a) empowerment and influence over decision making and (b) enriching people's lives and strengthening communities, should be supported by targets disaggregated by gender, race, faith, disability etc, eg numbers of people engaging in formal volunteering; numbers of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together; visits to environmental sites and the countryside; and take up of cultural opportunities.
- Community capacity building, empowerment and engagement should be fairly applied to all local communities – this may require additional effort in relation to particular diverse communities.

- Evidence that activity to promote cohesion takes place in areas at highest risk of community tension
- Evidence of cohesion-proofing in all four blocks