

**VSNW**  
**VOLUNTARY SECTOR**  
**NORTH WEST**

**Local Area Agreements:**

**How Involved is the Voluntary and  
Community Sector**

**May 2006**

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## BACKGROUND

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three year agreement that sets out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government, represented by the Government Office, and a local area, represented by the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and other key partners at local level. It will be refreshed annually which will enable changes in national or local priorities to be reflected.

LAAS are outcome based and will enable local authorities and their partners to deliver national outcomes in a way that reflects local priorities, particularly those identified in Community Strategies, which in turn reflect other strategies, such as the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Crime and Drugs Strategies and the Children and Young People's Plan.

The agreement is made up of outcomes, indicators and targets across a range of national and local priorities. These priorities are grouped round 4 blocks:

- Children and Young People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development and Enterprise.

The priorities need not be confined to the four blocks and local areas can consider other cross-cutting priorities that do not fit into the four blocks that can also be tackled through the LAA. (LAA guidance June 2005)

The process for the introduction of Local Area Agreements was first introduced in June 2004 with the issue of a Prospectus and it set out the key aims of Local Area Agreements as:

- to improve central/local relations
- to improve service delivery
- to improve efficiency
- to improve partnership working
- to enable local authorities to provide better leadership.

One of their main aims is to bring together a wide range of area based funding streams so that rationalisation and streamlining of their administration and monitoring could take place <sup>1</sup>

It was part of the Government's agenda to improve the relationship between central government and local government and to create 'mutual trust and responsibility'<sup>2</sup>.

The Prospectus states that the government's role was not to be prescriptive about how the LAA's should be developed. However, the LAA did need to show how it would achieve national outcomes, and later guidance provided advice on 'freedoms and flexibilities' which would enable the LAA to reflect local priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Local Area Agreement Guidance March 2006

<sup>2</sup> Local Area Agreements Guidance, ODPM, June 2005

Where did the voluntary and community sector fit within this new process? Within the initial Prospectus the Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) hardly rated a mention, yet the voluntary and community sector even two years ago were seen as having a key role in the government's vision for the delivery of public services. However, by the time the first Advice Note was produced the VCS role was more clearly identified and in the latest Local Area Agreements toolkit (March 2006) there are nearly two pages devoted to the importance of engaging the voluntary and community sector.

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## INTRODUCTION

Local Area Agreements are now about to be rolled out across the rest of England following the two rounds of piloting. In anticipation of this VSNW decided that as the North West had nine pilot areas in round two it would be a good time to look at how the sector was engaging with this process in the region, particularly as the experience of the two VCS organisations involved in the first round pilots (Knowsley and Wigan) had been so different.

During 2005 the second found of pilots took place across England with 9 of those pilots taking place in the North West

Blackburn with Darwen – Bolton – St. Helens – Wirral – Lancashire –  
Blackpool - Oldham – Stockport – Manchester

All of the pilots were either metropolitan or unitary authorities with the exception of Lancashire which is a two tier authority with twelve district authorities. Stockport was the only pilot not to have a Community Empowerment Network.

Stockport was chosen as a case study for this reason and Lancashire as another because of the complexity of drawing together the Local Area Agreement with twelve district authorities.

Two of the key messages from the Making it Work: voluntary and community sector involvement in Local Area Agreements<sup>3</sup> report were

- VCS involvement requires a strategic and specific approach. Umbrella bodies are key to the overarching strategic direction of the whole agreement. But for the detailed discussions about each outcome block, and the operational management of each block, it is important to be very specific about which VCS organisations can contribute information or activities.
- The VCS needs to organise itself and agree on representation and channels of communication so that the views of sector can be credibly represented and integrated into the LAA.

In carrying out an assessment of the level of involvement VSNW sought to find out how strategic and / or specific this engagement was. It also sought to find out whether or not specific communities were engaged and whether specific policies, such as Change Up, had had any impact. The role of Compact was also explored.

Two survey forms were devised one for the nine pilot LSPs taking part in round two and one for the voluntary and community sector based in the nine pilot areas. Survey forms also went to regional and sub-regional VCS umbrella organisations who would have members in the pilot areas. Copies of these can be found as

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<sup>3</sup> Improvement and Development Agency, June 2005, Making it Work: Voluntary and community sector involvement in Local Area Agreements

Appendix A and B. Additional information has been obtained from individual Local Area Agreement documents.

4 of the 9 pilot LSP's completed a questionnaire. 73 questionnaires were sent out to voluntary and community sector organisations in the pilots areas and responses were received from 14 covering all the pilot areas except one, Blackpool. This represents a response rate of 19%.

What is significant about the respondents to the VCS questionnaire is that they came from either Councils for Voluntary Service, Community Networks or Age Concerns. The one exception was a response from the lead body of a sub-regional consortium.

This would seem to indicate that there are three main organisations involved, and it has been difficult to find out either from LSPs or VCS organisations involved in the pilots what other organisations are involved either strategically or at the themed block level.

This report should by not be seen as a totally accurate report of VCS engagement but a view of the process as seen by those taking part.

In addition, it must be borne in mind that the guidance available to the local authorities leading on the development of the Agreement was quite minimal with regard to voluntary and community sector engagement. They had access to LAA Guidance dated June 2005 and also where there were Community Empowerment Networks there was the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund Guidance dated August 2005. It is only in the most recent LAA Toolkit dated March 2006 is there more detailed guidance for involving the voluntary and community sector, which has been informed by this latest round two of pilots.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

### At what level is the VCS engaged?

The four LSPs who responded – Bolton, Lancashire, Oldham and Stockport all said that the VCS sits on the steering group for the LAA. The responses from the VCS organisations who responded said they sit at a strategic level either on the steering group or on a themed block. This level of engagement has come about for some VCS organisations because either they already had a place at a strategic level with their LSP or were asked by the local authority to get involved. Others were proactive in asking to be involved.

*How did your organisation become involved in the LAA?*

	VCS Respondents - 14
VCS organisation was already involved in the LSP	4
VCS organisation was asked to be involved	4
VCS organisation proactively asked to be involved	4
Not relevant to the respondent	2

### VCS Organisations Involvement in the Delivery and Development of the LAA Themed Blocks

When questioned about themed blocks the answers were more variable. Some LSP respondents did not know who represents the VCS on themed blocks. The two main organisations that were there mentioned were either the CVS (on the Safer and Stronger Communities) or Age Concern (on Healthier Communities and Older People). It has not been easy to discover which children's VCS organisations are represented on the Children & Young People's Block except for one. From the survey there seems to be little representation of the VCS on the Economic Block, apart from Oldham and Lancashire, which has a BME representative nominated.

When asking VCS organisations if they are aware of which organisations other than themselves are involved, although the majority, 11, answered yes and only 3 no, the knowledge was often limited to one other organisation. However, responses from Oldham and St. Helens identified a wide range of organisations involved across the themed blocks. However, this level of awareness only refers to the Safer and Stronger Communities and the Older People and Healthier Communities blocks. VCS representation on the Children and Young People and the Economic block is not identified in terms of the individual organisations.

*VCS Representation on the Themed Blocks – based on responses from VCS organisations and LSPs covering 8 of the pilots*

Pilot	Safer & Stronger Communities	Older People & Healthier Communities	Children & Young People	Economic and Enterprise
Blackburn	Community Network			
Bolton	CVS	CVS		
Lancashire	Preston Community Network, Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale CVS	Age Concern Lancashire, Age Concern Preston Pukar Disability Resource Centre	NCH	Preston Muslim Forum
Manchester	CN4M	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oldham	Yes - 2	Age Concern + 1 other	Yes - 2	Yes - 2
St. Helens	CVS, Volunteer Centre, Age Concern, Groundwork	Age Concern, Carers Centre, Bereavement Services and Crossroads		
Stockport		Age Concern	Homestart	
Wirral	Wirral Community Network	Age Concern	Yes	Yes

The lack of VCS representation on the economic block could be because it is not considered relevant to the sector. However, the sector does have a role to play in social enterprise at a community level and there are within the North West a number of VCS social enterprises. Where bids for Local Economic Growth Initiative funds have been successful the VCS has a role to play in working with communities to develop their skills and capacity to develop local enterprises. There is also potentially a role for community finance initiatives such as credit unions and cooperatives.

**How many VCS organisations are negotiating the delivery of outcomes?**

Of the thirteen respondents to whom this was a relevant question, 8 were negotiating and 5 were not. The themes they were involved in also reflected the organisations who responded, i.e. the CVS's and CEN's were involved in the Safer and Stronger Communities outcomes and Age Concern with Older People's outcomes.

Volunteering was also an outcome that a number were also involved in, although this has proved problematic for Stockport in particular, where the voluntary sector was ultimately unsuccessful in their negotiations. This will be discussed in more detail in the case study of Stockport.

Negotiations are still ongoing in developing Action Plans in some of the pilots, and so some respondents were not certain what the outcome would be. Some VCS organisations have been successful in their negotiations, e.g. Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton and Wirral.

### **Have you been involved in any meetings with GO in attendance?**

This question was asked of those with a strategic role and the response was as follows:

	Yes	No	N/A or Did Not Say	Total
Respondents	4	6	4	14

Some of their attendance had been at training sessions run by IDeA, whereas others had led or been observers in meetings.

### **BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC ORGANISATIONS, RURAL COMMUNITIES, AND OTHER COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST SUCH AS AGE, DISABILITY, SEXUALITY, GENDER, FAITH ENGAGEMENT / AWARENESS OF THE LAA**

This question was asked both of LSPs and of VCS ‘umbrella’ organisations and in the main the responses seemed to indicate that there was little direct engagement by BME and other minority organisations in the LAA process but that a range of mechanisms were used to raise the awareness of LAAs.

The LSPs who responded said that their contact with BME and other communities of interest was either through VCS networks or through existing advisory groups such as Community Cohesion. The only responding LSP who said they had minority ethnic organisation directly engaged is Lancashire who has Pukar Disability Resource Centre as a nominated organisation on the Healthier Communities and Older People Block and the Preston Muslim Forum on the Economic block.

The responses from the umbrella VCS organisations also highlighted what seems to be an ‘arms length’ engagement by BME and other communities of interest in the process. There were a variety of responses.

Some used the forums they are involved with or their database of contacts to raise awareness to BME organisations other communities of interest. This is done through specific events or through newsletters, etc.

One respondent said that there was a 'binding duty' on all LAA participants and representatives to represent the entire membership of the voluntary and community sector network.

However, in conversation with individual organisations the lack of engagement especially by BME organisations within the LAA process was a matter of concern which it was felt needed to be addressed.

### **Is the LAA recognising the contribution that BME and the other communities of interest make to the cross-cutting themes?**

The response from the VCS organisations was more or less evenly divided between those who felt they were but for some in a limited way and others who could not identify it within the themes of the LAA they were engaged with, or even strategically.

Although for some it was being addressed through Community Cohesion or the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund or being evidenced through benchmarking work. However, others could see no evidence of it and reference in questionnaire responses was made not only to Black and Minority Ethnic but to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transsexual communities and rural communities.

### **COMPACT – WHAT ROLE IF ANY DID THIS PLAY?**

The LAA Guidance of June 2005 states that local compacts form the basis of the partnership relationship with the VCS, providing the framework for partnership working between local public sector bodies, including local authorities, and local voluntary and community sector organisations. Local Compacts are increasingly involving a wider range of public bodies.

All respondents, both LSPs and VCS organisations, stated that there was a Compact in place.

Two pilot areas mentioned that there is a reference to the Compact in their Local Area Agreement document, and one in their Statement of Involvement. None felt that local Compacts had any direct impact on the negotiation process other than the written references identified above with the following exception.

Two organisations – one LSP and one VCS - both from the same LAA pilot - said that indirectly it had made a difference in that they had recently gone through the Compact development process, and the relationships they had developed through this had helped in the LAA negotiation process.

## HOW HAS THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR RAISED AWARENESS OF THE LAA PROCESS TO THOSE NOT INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS?

### How well publicised was the LAA?

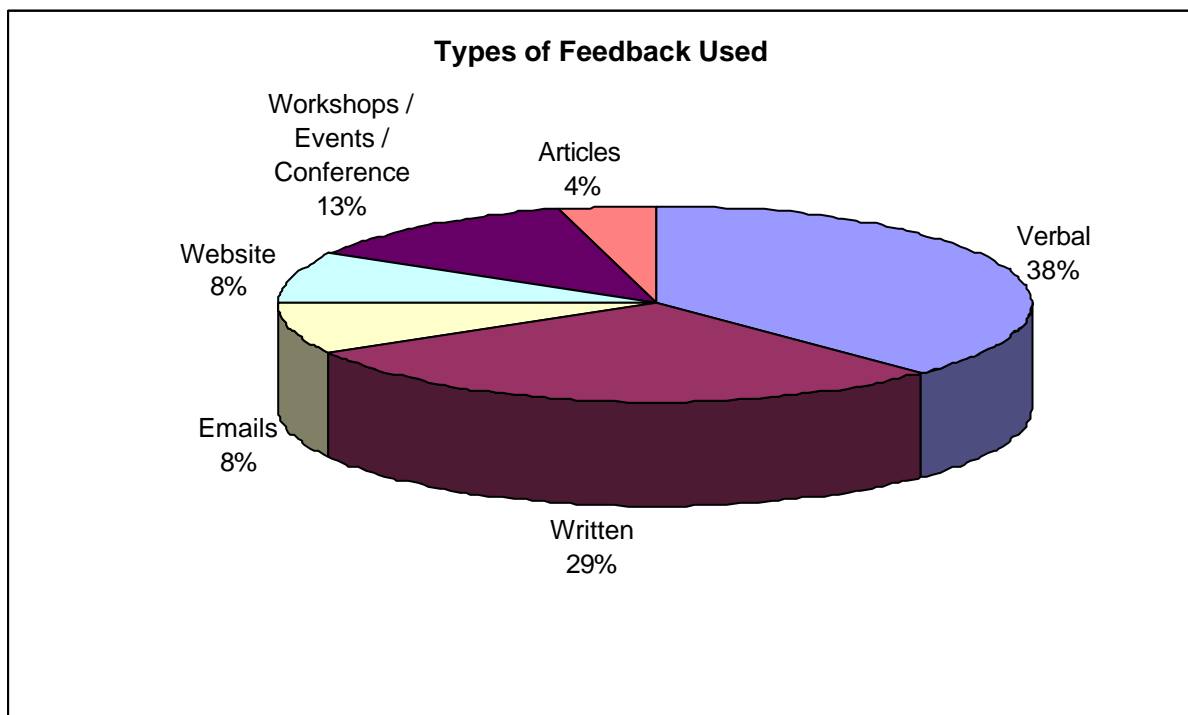
Both LSPs and the VCS organisations that responded had held or had taken part in events to publicise the LAA to the sector.

For VCS organisations this was either events they put on themselves or had attended. Some used existing conferences or existing forums as an opportunity to explain LAA's to the wider sector.

### Do VCS organisations with a representative role feed back to the sector?

There were two questions here one was about feedback to the wider sector and the other to organisations with an interest in one of the themed blocks. All except one responded that they did feed back both widely and thematically as appropriate.

There was a cross over in the responses to these two questions with feed back going to both specific forums such as Health and Social Care and others to wider voluntary community and faith forums. This took the form of verbal, newsletters, emails, reports, website and word of mouth. The pie chart below shows by percentage the different methods used to feedback.



Although there appears to be widespread feedback to the sector, there did appear to be a lack of sharing of between the organisations engaged with the different themed

blocks. This was highlighted as an issue especially in the two tier pilot area, where although the Community Empowerment Network representative fed back to the other CEN's, there was no mechanism in place for her to talk to the other VCS representatives on other LAA blocks. This issue is also highlighted in the lack of knowledge by VCS organisations of who the other VCS representatives are on themed blocks outlined earlier.

### **Is there any feedback to the sub-regional Consortia?**

The response to this was mainly in the negative. Out of the 14 responses, 8 did not, 3 did not say and 2 said yes.

The two who said yes were feeding back to the Lancashire consortia, who appointed the strategic VCS representative to the Lancashire LAA. The two Merseyside respondents said that discussions had taken place informally and that LAA's did not appear on the Agenda at their consortia meetings.

A VCS organisation in a metropolitan borough said that he felt that the reason no discussion took place was because that each area was at a different stage with their LAA.

### **Have strong links been made to Change Up in Local Area Agreement?**

The June 05 LAA guidance that was available when the current round of pilot LAAs were being developed said that areas should look to build on the infrastructure or capacity building services being developed through Change Up where relevant and that it could be aligned within the LAA. It said that Capacity building may be the means to achieving other outcomes or be an outcome itself. The most recent guidance (March 06) states that Change Up as a funding stream is now being aligned in the LAA.

Of the four LSPs who responded three said responded yes, there had been links, and one did not say. The response from the VCS organisations perspective was that half of those responding said no links had been made and about a third said yes there had been.

It would appear that although there may be written references to it within some LAA's, and there have been some discussions of the potential links in terms of how Change Up can be incorporated into the delivery of outcomes, there has not so far been any practical inclusion of it. Lancashire has stated that they plan to make links to Change Up through the Action Plans that are currently being developed.

One LAA which did try to make the links with stronger and more sustainable communities and Change Up but was turned down by Government Office because they considered it an input.

GMCVO as the lead body of the Greater Manchester Consortia in their response said that some work has started with local authorities under Change Up over developing the contracting/procurement processes and how this will link into LAAs.

## **RESOURCING AND BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF VCS TO ENGAGE WITH LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS**

The LAA Guidance of June 05 does give guidance on the need to consult and involve the voluntary and community sector but it is only in the most recent guidance published in March 06 that it is more specific about resourcing and building the capacity of the sector's involvement. The latest guidance says

*“You will want to consider how to invest appropriately in capacity building from the resources available through the LAA since this can be a critical factor in sustaining success and integrating the LAA with other community strategies. ChangeUp can help you achieve this.”<sup>4</sup>*

### **What resources if any have been made available to the VCS to take part in the process?**

No direct financial resources have been made available to the VCS organisations taking part but it should also be pointed out that no organisation has asked for any either.

Two of the LSPs who responded in the main felt that they funded VCS organisations in a variety of ways, for instance through supporting the sub-regional Consortia or through direct funding of organisations and some, e.g. CENs were paid to engage with LSPs.

The main resource for some VCS organisations had been in local authority officer time who met with them. In addition there has been some involvement in the Improvement and Development Agency Training for Local Area Agreements. One LSP funded delegates travel etc to Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) LAA training and the cost of putting on LAA events for the local vcfs forum.

It was also suggested that it was perhaps up to the VCS to make a case for payment in terms of time and travel, especially when they are there in a representative role for the VCS locally.

### **How is the capacity of the VCS to engage with LAAs being built?**

On the issue of building the capacity of the sector to engage the June 05 Guidance was not as specific as the most recent toolkit. The 05 Guidance says the LAA should state how partners have considered the capacity of the sector to contribute

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<sup>4</sup> Local Area Agreement Toolkit, ODPM, March 2006

effectively. Whereas the recent Toolkit identifies that initial investment in supporting the capacity of the sector and individuals to engage will lead to longer term success in their involvement in design and subsequent delivery of the LAA. The toolkit states that initial investment can trigger a 'virtuous circle' which leads to increased capacity and skills for the VCS and local people which in turn leads to more sustainable outcomes for communities.

Only one of the LSPs who responded said they had funded directly VCS representatives to take part in the training programme developed with IDeA for the LAA. Others saw this capacity building in terms of the delivery of outcomes of the LAA which includes the capacity building of the sector.

### **Has Community Engagement and increasing Social Capital been recognised as an Outcome that attracts funding?**

Three of the four LSPs who responded said yes but only one provided any further comment. Lancashire saw Community Engagement as a 'cornerstone' of their LAA and had obtained funding to look at how it could further develop this engagement.

### **Has their been VCS involved in the development of the Statement of Involvement**

The four LSP's who responded said the VCS had been involved. Oldham commented that this was through regular reports to the LSP Steering Group, Lancashire had involved the VCS in commenting on its content, and Stockport had asked the CVS to write the document.

Of the VCS organisations who responded five had been involved and the remainder had not. This involvement varied from being asked to write the document to being asked to comment on a draft. However, Stockport CVS who had been asked to write the document felt it would have been more appropriate to have been asked to write it towards the end of the process rather than, as it was asked to do, at the beginning.

## **TAKING THE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT FORWARD**

### **Do VCS organisations know what role they will play in delivery and development of LAA?**

There was a mixed response to this question mainly because at the time of the survey Local Area Agreements were at different stages of development and so the future role of the VCS was in some areas unclear, especially if the organisation did not already have an existing role with the LSP, especially at a strategic level.

Some said they would have a role in delivering outcomes but were unsure whether they would remain on specific sub-groups, where as others did. Wirral stated they had a 'fit for purpose' role as a partner on all the thematic blocks and that their role

within the LSP in this context was now firmly established. The remainder did not know at this stage and respondents from Lancashire felt it would be dependent on the cluster groups who were developing the action plans.

### **VCS Involvement in Performance Management of the LAA**

The involvement as far as the LSP was concerned fell into two areas. The VCS would be involved either because they are part of the LSP executive and therefore will automatically be involved in Performance Management. Or they were involved in delivering outcomes, in which case they would have an involvement in Performance Management as part of the delivery process.

From the voluntary and community sector perspective some who responded were not sure what their role would be and at what level, whether if they were part of one of the blocks this would give them a role. Others who were part of the steering groups or LSP board were surer.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Involvement by the Voluntary and Community Sector at a strategic level seems to be fairly consistent. Although there are gaps identified in the survey at Thematic block level, it is difficult to be sure whether this is because of lack of awareness within the voluntary and community sector or within the LSP / local authority about what is happening in the parts of the LAA that individuals are not involved with.

Although there appears to be widespread feedback by the VCS to the wider sector, there did appear to be a lack of sharing of between the organisations engaged with the different themed blocks. This was highlighted as an issue especially in the two tier pilot area, where although the Community Empowerment Network representative fed back to the other CEN's, there was no mechanism in place to talk to the other VCS representatives on other LAA blocks. This issue is also highlighted in the lack of knowledge by VCS organisations of who the other VCS representatives are on themed blocks indicated above.

A criticism which is often levelled at public bodies is that they work in silos, that one department does not know what the other is doing and so there is no 'joined up' approach to issues. The voluntary and community sector appears in some of the pilots to be working in a similar way with regard to Local Area Agreement thematic blocks.

**Recommendation:** The voluntary and community sector organisations who are engaged in the steering group and on thematic blocks meet to discuss progress and share information. This could lead to a more cohesive approach from the voluntary and community sector to future negotiations. In two tier areas the sub-regional Change Up consortia could have a role to play in coordinating this.

The capacity of the sector to engage was an issue in the two tier area where it was felt that the engagement was spread too thinly and in Stockport, the non-CEN area, where VCS networks, including BME and inter-Faith, still need to be developed and strengthened. This could also be an issue when the final rounds of LAAs are developed in this current year. Stockport also identified that when they were asked to increase their VCS representation on the LAA six-fold, the sector did not feel it could do this, and thus it was left to the two existing organisations who are already involved. This has implications for the capacity of those involved and a similar issue has arisen with Lancashire LAA, where one person has been asked to take on three roles – a steering group role, representing older people and a health role.

The lack of VCS representation on the economic block could be because it is not considered relevant to the sector. However, the sector does have a role to play in social enterprise at a community level and there are within the North West a number of VCS social enterprises. Where bids for Local Economic Growth Initiative funds have been successful the VCS has a role to play in working with communities to develop their skills and capacity to develop local enterprises. There is also potentially a role for community finance initiatives such as credit unions and cooperatives.

Although some BME organisations had places on thematic blocks, the overall impression from the survey was one of them being informed of the process rather than being directly involved. Individual respondents also expressed their concern about the level of involvement.

**Recommendation:** The voluntary and community sector networks to consider how best to ensure that the representational role is shared amongst the sector without overburdening individuals and their organisations. In addition to ensure that this representation is inclusive of BME and other communities of interest.

The LAA Toolkit states that initial investment in the voluntary and community sector can trigger a 'virtuous circle' which leads to increased capacity and skills for the VCS and local people which in turn leads to more sustainable outcomes for communities. This is perhaps an opportunity for VCS organisations to make a case for more direct support for their involvement.

Change Up although it is mentioned in some of the Local Area Agreement documents did not from the respondents replies appear to have as yet been incorporated into any delivery plans. In fact the one attempt to do so failed. There perhaps needs to be a greater understanding developed between local consortia and their LSPs as to what the purpose of Change Up is and how it can be used to develop the capacity of the VCS in relation to Local Area Agreement Outcomes.

The report has been about the level of involvement of the sector and did not set out to compare the success of one pilot with another. That was not its purpose.

However, one issue that did occur which affected one pilot's ability to deliver an outcome was the robustness of data. Although Stockport voluntary sector negotiations to deliver on a stretch target on Volunteering ultimately failed because of the increase in numbers of volunteers that would be required; an additional factor was a lack of confidence in the baseline data. Citizen's Panel data had been suggested as the baseline in Stockport but there was concern about this, yet in other areas of the region the same type of data was used successfully in negotiations.

**Recommendation:** There should be a common approach to what data is acceptable and what isn't across all Local Area Agreement areas, rather than the current situation where what is acceptable in one area isn't in another.

Overall, the findings of the survey would suggest that the voluntary and community sector has been involved at a strategic level and in negotiating outcomes, but there are significant gaps in that involvement.

The sector needs to have a coherent and coordinated voice. It needs to work together so that the sector is seen as credible and organised whilst individual organisations retain their identity.

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **LANCASHIRE**

The findings in the case study are drawn from the organisations who responded to the questionnaire and from conversations with Lancashire County Council, Age Concern Lancashire and Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale CVS and Preston CEN.

Lancashire was chosen as a case study because it is a two tier authority and therefore the issues for the voluntary and community sector in engaging were more complex.

Lancashire is a two tier authority, unlike the metropolitan or unitary authorities it does not deliver all council services but has responsibility for certain ones across the county such as education, social services, highways, waste disposal, trading standards for example. Other and the remainder of local authority services are delivered via twelve district authorities.

These twelve districts each have a Local Strategic Partnership. Whereas in the unitary and metropolitan areas there is one Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) per authority developing the Local Area Agreement (LAA) , in Lancashire the twelve district LSPs and the County-wide LSP have to come together to create one LAA for Lancashire.

The Local Area Agreement Guidance (2005) published by ODPM acknowledges that it will be more complicated for two tier areas, but says that it provides a real opportunity to facilitate joint working between county and district councils. It goes on to say that any agreement will need to demonstrate that there has been engagement with district councils and their partners.

To assist district councils to address capacity issues during the development of the LAA, in Lancashire the districts councils divided themselves into three clusters – North (Fylde, Lancaster and Wyre), East (Burnley, Pendle, Ribble Valley, Rossendale) and Central (Chorley, Preston, South Ribble, West Lancashire).

#### **At what level is the VCS engaged?**

There were four responses from voluntary and community sector organisations in Lancashire. Three of these organisations – Age Concern Lancashire, Burnley Pendle and Rossendale CVS and Preston CEN – are there in a representative capacity on behalf of voluntary, community and faith sector in different ways.

Lancashire County Council when seeking a VCS representation on the steering group for the Local Area Agreement approached the Lancashire Voluntary and Community Sector Faith Consortium, which delegated the decision on representation to the county Compact Working Group. The Chief Officer of Age Concern Lancashire agreed to represent the Lancashire VCFS on the LAA Steering Group

In addition, the Chief Officer of Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale CVS who represented the 8 Lancashire CVS's on the Lancashire LSP, was asked by the Lancashire VCFS

Consortium to represent them on the Safer and Stronger Communities Block. The Chief Officer of Age Concern also represents Older People on the Older People and Healthier Communities Block.

Finally, within the Lancashire County Council area there are four Community Empowerment Networks (Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Preston), and the coordinator of the Preston CEN volunteered to represent the CENs on the Safer and Stronger Communities Block.

### **VCS Organisations Involvement in the Delivery and Development of the LAA Themed Blocks**

At the time of the survey the process of negotiating on delivery of outcomes was only just beginning, but the four respondents from Lancashire said that they were involved. The CVS and CENs would be negotiating in the Safer and Stronger Communities Block and the two Age Concerns who responded would be negotiating in the Healthier Communities and Older Peoples block.

It should be noted that as part of the new funding arrangements, the four CENs in Lancashire would have their “core costs” funding passported directly to them by the County Council. These funds would be aligned with the Safer and Stronger Communities Block but any other funding would have to be negotiated by the CENs with their relevant LSP.

The Pukar Disability Resource Centre has a place on the Older People and Healthier Communities Block and the Preston Muslim Forum represent the Lancashire BME pact on the Economic Block.

For the purposes of action planning, LSPs have worked in clusters to feed into developing action planning being managed by the block Steering Groups but it is unclear how many voluntary and community sector organisations have been engaged in these cluster groups. Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale CVS and Pendle CEN have attended one meeting of the East cluster, but Preston CEN were only recently invited to a Central cluster meeting, which was going to be the last one, and they were unable to attend.

The question of involvement in meetings with Government Office in attendance was targeted at organisations that have a representative role either on the steering group or on the blocks. Two of the four respondents stated that Government Office had often been in attendance at block meetings.

### **How is it ensured that BME organisations, rural communities, and other communities of interest such as age, disability, sexuality, gender, faith are engaged / aware of the LAA?**

This question was asked of both Lancashire County Council and of the VCFS organisations. Lancashire County Council, as noted above, stated there are two BME organisations involved in two of the blocks. The Pukar Disability Resource Centre on the Older People and Healthier Communities and the Preston Muslim Forum on behalf of the Lancashire BME Pact on the Economic Block.

The VCFS organisations who responded were unaware of any BME organisations engaged in any of the blocks. In particular felt they that there was no recognition of the BME communities or other communities of interest in the Safer and Stronger Communities block or in terms of cross cutting themes. One organisation particularly mentioned the lack of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual communities which exist across the county.

The only direct connection that has been made is by the Lancashire VCFS consortium representative on the steering group who had met with the Faith sector representative from the VCFS consortium. The other link was through the Lancashire BME Pact who was on the Compact Working Group which the Lancs VCFS representative also attended.

### **The Role of Compact**

It was through the Lancashire Compact Working Group that the VCFS representative for the LAA steering group was nominated. However, the Compact Working Group itself does not focus on the Local Area Agreement. At district level Compacts are not in place across all areas, for instance Fylde has a Compact but Pendle and Rossendale do not.

Overall in terms of working processes it was not felt to have had an impact by those who responded on the development of the LAA other than as the source for voluntary sector representation on the steering group.

### **How has the Voluntary and Community Sector raised awareness of the LAA process to those not involved in the process?**

#### **How well publicised was the LAA?**

Lancashire County Council has held three partners conferences to which the voluntary, community and faith sector were invited and a number of these organisations attended. In addition, a number of presentations on the LAA were given to the Compact Working Group.

Only one of the four VCS organisations who responded had held particular events, and one had been part of a local strategic partnership event. In discussion with individual organisations the problem of capacity for the sector to act in this representative role was highlighted. Representing the vcfs on either a block or the steering group was time consuming. It was felt there was a need for there to be more people from the sector involved as individuals were trying to fit in this representative work with their other work for their own organisations. This was especially so where they were involved in representing more than one interest, i.e. the sector plus their own organisation.

#### **Do VCS organisations with a representative role feed back to the sector?**

All the VCFS organisations that had representational roles fed back through passing on agendas, minutes, reports from the meetings they attended. For the two organisations representing the Lancashire VCFS Consortium their feed back goes to

this forum and the CEN representative feeds back to the other CENs. In addition, there is feed back to the Lancashire CVS's through the Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale CVS Chief Officer who also represents the CVS's on the Safer and Stronger Communities Block.

Although the information is forwarded there is a concern that there is little feedback and that because of time constraints they do not have the time to engage with other organisations involved with the Local Area Agreement. It was suggested that there are too few people spread too thinly which leads to capacity issues in attending meetings. It was suggested that a reference group for the LAA would be useful in helping those in a representative role have a point of contact with others also involved in the process.

### **Have strong links been made to Change Up in Local Area Agreement?**

Change Up is mentioned in the LAA's Statement of Involvement:

*"Funding available through Change Up and the Rural, Social and Community Programme is also being used to help to build the capacity of the VCFS to assist with this process through the establishment of the VCFS Consortium, although the VCFS will need more than this funding to help deliver the targets in this agreement."*  
(Lancashire Local Area Agreement 2006-09)

Outside of this respondents were unsure whether there has been any other reference to it during negotiations. The Lancashire VCFS representatives have argued that Change Up is not 'specifically to assist the LAA process' which is what they feel the wording in the Agreement implies.

### **VCS and the Statement of Involvement**

This document was drafted by Lancashire County Council in consultation with the VCFS representative on the LAA Steering Group, and was then forwarded to the VCS through the Lancashire Consortium for their comment. This is the one document that three of the four respondents said saw greater involvement by the wider sector. Comment was received and amendments made as a result.

### **Resourcing and Building the Capacity of VCS to engage with Local Area Agreements.**

This was a major issue for the respondents, especially those in a representative capacity. Whereas many of the other partners are representing public bodies such as PCT's, local authorities, police, with larger resources in terms of staffing. VCFS organisations are usually small organisations with few staff, and generally speaking it is the Chief Officer, who is asked to attend, and there is no one to 'back fill' their work and those involved felt that they did not have the capacity to engage as widely as they should in order to be truly representative of the sector.

In terms of whether or not the LSP had offered the VCFS anything in the way of financial resources they had not other than in the availability of staff time. In responding to the questionnaire it was stated that the County Council contributes to

the core costs of a number of VCFS organisations which they say would include engagement.

As with the wider survey no VCFS organisation had actually asked for any financial resources. Through Change Up the Lancashire VCFS Consortium is paying some of the costs of their LAA representatives.

The LSP suggested that any additional resources for the VCFS to engage could come through the Action Plans where the VCFS would be delivering on outcomes and it was here that additional resources could be sought. However, it could be argued that those resources would be going to individual organisations to deliver specific outcomes, which might not be related to 'representational' activities on behalf of the sector.

In terms of building the capacity of the sector, the LSP responded that it supports the development of Lancashire Consortium and the Compact Working Group and Every Child Matters sub-group. LCC also has a VCFS liaison officer.

Further it feels that resources to develop the capacity of the sector will come through the Action Plans for the LAA which it sees as developing the skills of the sector to engage. This latter comment links back to the Statement of Involvement which mentions both Change Up and the Rural Social and Community Programme as being used to build the capacity of the sector.

In terms of the Safer and Stronger Communities block and its role in building the capacity of the voluntary, community and faith sector it was felt by VCFS respondents that support for VCFS infrastructure was weak and that within the Block emphasis was on Safer and not Stronger, because the bulk of the representation comes from public authority Community Safety representatives.

### **Has Community Engagement and increasing Social Capital been recognised as an Outcome that attracts funding?**

The Lancashire Partnership has commissioned research from the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit on wider neighbourhood engagement beyond that which is Neighbourhood Renewal funding. They want to use best practice and develop a model that can be implemented across the whole of Lancashire not just in the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund areas.

### **Taking the Local Area Agreement Forward**

#### **Do VCS organisations know what role they will play in delivery and development of LAA?**

At the time that the survey was carried out the VCFS organisations were unsure what their role would be as the Action Plans were still in the process of being developed and it was dependent on what happened in the three cluster groups within Lancashire.

## **VCS Involvement in Performance Management of the LAA**

Again there was uncertainty over this although where organisations were already involved in blocks they thought that they probably would be.

Lancashire LSP said that they had planned to have a Performance Management and Financial Management Group which would include the voluntary and community sector. However, no decision had yet been made as to the overall performance management arrangements for the LAA due to alternative proposals being put forward by some partners.

## **STOCKPORT**

Stockport was chosen as a case study because it was the only pilot area not to have a Community Empowerment Network and therefore the networks of voluntary and community sector organisations and groups may have been less developed.

The information included in this section was gained from questionnaire responses from Age Concern Stockport, Stockport CVS and Stockport LSP and from conversations with the Corporate Policy Manager at Stockport Council and the then Chief Officer of Stockport CVS.

### **At what level is the VCS engaged**

The Stockport Local Area Agreement was developed from existing plans and strategies, including the Community Strategy, and the LSP were carrying out development work based on this to establish new networks including a Black and Minority Ethnic Network, and strengthen the inter-Faith network.

There was already existing VCS representation on the LSP which consisted of Stockport CVS, Age Concern Stockport and two community representatives – one from the Neighbourhood Renewal area and a shared Black and Minority Ethnic place.

The Chief Officer of Stockport CVS was invited to be part of the project group for developing the LAA and the Chief Officer of Age Concern Stockport was invited to join the Healthier Communities & Older People block working group, specifically for the Older People's aspect. Stockport CVS also sit on the Safer & Stronger Communities Block.

The Chief Officer of Stockport CVS in his role on the Stockport Partnership representative has attended meetings at which Government Office have been present.

With regard to Children and Young People, this block was based on the Children & Young People's Partnership Plan and it was suggested that the involvement would be at that level, rather than the block. However, it does seem that through MOVES (Meeting of Voluntary Executives in Stockport) organisations were asked for comments on the themes and if there were specific targets they wish to engage with.

It was also suggested that the Healthier Communities, which was based on the Stockport Health Improvement Strategy, was where the sector should have had an input.

The comment was made that as negotiations took place the VCS faced the challenge of being asked to increase the number of volunteers by six fold. Due to the tight timescale and level of detail concerning LAA the VCS faced capacity issues in being able to fully engage with the process. Members of MOVES felt this to be unachievable and so most organisations were involved across the Blocks via MOVES but not on the individual blocks.

The VCS forum in Stockport is quite new and it was felt the lack of a Community Empowerment Network severely restricted the wider sectors ability to fully engage with the LAA process.

### **How many VCS organisations are negotiating the delivery of outcomes?**

Age Concern is involved in delivery of outcomes on the Healthier Communities & Older People block and was also involved in the development of the Volunteering outcome.

The sector decided that it would focus on Volunteering as an Outcome and had discussions with the LSP with regard to its delivery. However, it came up against a number of difficulties and eventually it was dropped. The reasons why are outlined below and come from conversations with both the Stockport Council Corporate Policy Manager and the then Chief Officer of Stockport CVS.

The only way to bring additional funding to the Local Area Agreement was through Reward Element Targets and it was decided to use Volunteering as a target for this. The voluntary and community sector were keen to be involved but the following issues eventually led to it being dropped.

- The robustness of data held by CVS was not considered strong enough to assess the outcomes. CVS agreed that getting baseline information was difficult but it was decided to use the Citizens Panel as this up to date – 17% of people in Stockport saw themselves as a volunteer. CVS were also involved in measuring the impact of volunteering through Volunteering England and Change Up – this could also have been used as a base line and would have provided a link to Change Up. However, the issues of confidence around this data remained.
- The reward element is very strictly controlled via a set of guidance provided by Government Office. Certain groups of volunteers have more value than others so the target of £600,000 was easier to achieve via some groups. The highest tariff was attributed to those recruited by the statutory sector, e.g. community policemen, school governors, magistrates. Hard to reach groups had a tariff of £1,000 per volunteer and Other volunteers were valued at £250 each. It was therefore much more difficult for the voluntary sector to reach a £600,000 target via their normal volunteer recruitment. In addition VCS had limited baseline for ‘hard to reach groups’.

- The VCS also disputed the value put on Other volunteers which they felt did not even equate to the minimum wage hourly rate. Stockport CVS felt that this cost valuation devalues the importance of volunteering. An additional problem was that Volunteering sat within the Safer and Stronger Communities block and was not a cross-cutting theme.
- In the end the GO guidance had to be addressed, and this would have meant recruiting six times more volunteers than currently in order to reach the stretch target.
- The timescales prevented a VCS strategy being developed.
- Overall it was felt that the GO guidance was really a set of instructions that could not be amended.

**How is it ensured that BME organisations, rural communities, and other communities of interest such as age, disability, sexuality, gender, faith are engaged / aware of the LAA?**

The LSP with support from Stockport CVS has recently established a Black and Minority Ethnic Network. However, it is agreed that at this stage their involvement with the LAA will have been through their representative on the LSP seeing reports on the LAA's progress.

The LSP held an event which was open to all groups to shape the priorities of the LAA and the LAA document states that one third of those attending were from the voluntary and community sector.

Due to tight deadlines the focus on consultation with the voluntary sector was achieved via the MOVES (Meeting of Voluntary Executives Stockport). This was felt to be appropriate as MOVES is a wide ranging group (membership currently 27) and consists of organisations who could be involved in the delivery of aspects of the LAA. However, there was felt to be a significant gap in terms of how to engage with the wider community groups. Stockport CVS feels their continued role in developing the VCS forum will help to ensure a greater role may be played by more organisations in the future.

**Compact – what role if any did this play?**

The Stockport Local Area Agreement states:

*“The Stockport Compact, ‘Stockport Together’, provides the framework for joint working between all partners, with a particular emphasis on the needs of the VCS. It has been adopted by the Stockport Partnership and sets out a shared vision and principles for promoting equal working relationships. .... the Compact will underpin the delivery of the Local Area Agreement and enable partners to work more effectively together by promoting a greater understanding of the needs of each sector.”*

(Working Together for a Better Stockport, 16 March 06)

Neither of the two VCS organisations felt that it had been particularly relevant in the development of the LAA. Both pointed out that it is currently being reviewed via a

Scrutiny Committee to provide codes of practice to encourage and facilitate wider use.

### **How has the Voluntary and Community Sector raised awareness of the LAA process to those not involved in the process?**

Both the VCS organisations had used MOVES and the newly established VCS forum to hold LAA briefings. However, comment was made that as Stockport does not have Community Empowerment Networks it has proved difficult to engage with the wider sector.

Stockport CVS have used a variety of methods to feed back to the sector including regular consultation events with MOVES and articles in their newsletter. It says that further engagement with community groups has been difficult as the VCS forum is new and they are still establishing systems to strengthen communication methods.

There progress with the development of the LAA has not been fed back to the sub-regional consortia as it was not felt to be appropriate due to the different stages that all the pilots were at.

### **Have strong links been made to Change Up in Local Area Agreement?**

The Stockport Local Area Agreement makes specific mention of the Change Up funding stream and the synergy this has with the need for community engagement which is a central part of the LAA. They see support for this in the form of the development of the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum and strengthening the inter-Faith Network.

The CVS said that members of the Local Change Up Consortium have discussed LAAs. The target of increasing the capacity of organisations to support more volunteers also cuts across both Change Up and LAAs. Baseline information for the proposed volunteering project was being obtained via a project which was part funded by Change Up

### **Resourcing and Building the Capacity of VCS to engage with Local Area Agreements**

Neither of the two VCS organisations who responded have received any resources to take part in the Local Area Agreements, but as one pointed out, neither did they ask for any.

In talking to Stockport Policy Manager, resources have been in the form of officer time spent with the Chief Officer of the CVS and in attending meetings of MOVES.

In terms of building the capacity of the sector this was seen in terms of pump priming funding given to particular organisations to improve their service provision. It was not seen in terms of the capacity of the sector in terms of staff time to understand and engage with the LAA.

Community Engagement and increasing Social Capital are not recognised as Outcomes that attract funding. One of the issues for Stockport is that unlike other pilot areas they do not have a Community Empowerment Network and also Neighbourhood Renewal Funding is restricted to one part of the borough.

### **Has there been VCS involved in the development of the Statement of Involvement**

The Statement of Involvement was given to Stockport CVS to prepare but this was at the beginning of the process, at the end of September, because it needed to be submitted with the first draft of the LAA. The Chief Officer feels that it would have been better to produce at the end of the process once discussions had developed.

### **Taking the Local Area Agreement Forward**

#### **Do VCS organisations know what role they will play in the delivery and development of LAA?**

Stockport CVS were unsure at the stage of answering the survey. However, Age Concern was more sure because of its role in Older People & Healthier Communities block.

Both however felt they would be involved in Performance Management because of their roles with the Stockport Partnership Board.

## **List of Respondents to Survey**

### **Local Strategic Partnerships**

Bolton

Lancashire

Oldham

Stockport

### **Voluntary and Community Sector**

Age Concern Fylde

Age Concern Lancashire

Age Concern Manchester

Age Concern Oldham

Age Concern Stockport

Age Concern South Lakes

Blackburn with Darwen Age Concern

Bolton CVS

Burnley Pendle & Rossendale CVS

Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations

Preston Community Network

St. Helens CVS

Stockport CVS

Wirral Community Network

**Local Area Agreement Survey**

Voluntary Sector North West with the support of Government Office North West is undertaking an assessment of the level of engagement of the Voluntary and Community Sector in the development of Local Area Agreements in the pilot areas.

The aim is to produce a regional voluntary and community sector statement of involvement and the outcome is that the VCS is better able to identify how it can contribute both strategically and as individual organisations to Local Area Agreements.

**VSNW**  
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11<sup>th</sup> January 2006

Dear Colleague

As the development of Local Area Agreements is now well underway and heading towards completion, we feel it is an appropriate time to gather your comments on aspects of engagement by the voluntary and community sector in this process. A similar survey is being undertaken with the voluntary and community sector in the pilot areas also. The findings of the survey will form the basis of a Regional Event in April to share good practice and explore any issues that have arisen for both LSP's and the VCS.

Please find below a short survey which we would be pleased if you could complete and **return by Tuesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006**. You can complete the survey online and return via email, or print it off and post it to the above address.

**Confidentiality:**

If you would like your comments to remain non-attributable in the final report please indicate in the 'Other Comments' box at the end of the survey.

If you would like to discuss the survey please contact **Margaret McLeod** on 0161 276 9303 or email [margaret.mcleod@vsnw.org.uk](mailto:margaret.mcleod@vsnw.org.uk). I would also like to follow up the survey with some pilots and will contact you to discuss this.

**Local Area Agreement Survey**

<b>Name of LSP /Local Authority</b>	
<b>Your name</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>	
<b>Email</b>	

**Developing the Local Area Agreement**

1.	Does a VCS organisation sit on the group responsible for the overall strategic development of the LAA? If YES, please say which organisation	YES	NO
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## Appendix A

2.	Do you have VCS representation on each LAA Block? If YES, please say which organisations on which block	YES	NO
	Safe & Stronger Communities		
	Children & Young People		
	Healthier Communities and Older People		
	Economic Development		
3.	Did you hold an event to explain Local Area Agreements to partners, including the VCS prior to the development process?  If NO, in hindsight do you feel this would have been beneficial? Please comment.	YES	NO
4.	How are you ensuring that BME organisations and other communities of interest such as gender, age, disability, sexuality, faith, rural are engaged? Please comment		
5.	Does the LSP or the local authority have a 'COMPACT' with the local VCS? If YES, has this helped in the engagement of the sector, or not made any difference. Please comment.	YES	NO
6.	Have you provided any resources to enable the VCS to engage as an equal partner? If YES, what form did they take?	YES	NO
7.	How are you building the capacity of the VCS to engage with the LAA process? Please comment.		
8.	When developing the LAA have links been made to other policy initiatives, in particular Change Up? Please comment	YES	NO
9.	Have the VCS been involved in the development the Statement of Involvement? Please comment.	YES	NO

Appendix A

<b>Taking the Local Area Agreement Forward</b>			
10.	Will the VCS be involved in the Performance Management of the LAA? Please comment.	YES	NO
11.	Have Community Engagement and increasing Social Capital been recognised as an Outcome that attracts funding? If NO, please explain why	YES	NO

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

**Please complete and return this questionnaire by 31st January 2006**

Many thanks for taking the time to complete the questionnaire and if you have any questions please contact Margaret McLeod – details below.

Margaret McLeod  
Sector Development Officer  
Tel: 0161 276 9303  
Mobile: 07980 683927  
Email: [margaret.mcleod@vsnw.org.uk](mailto:margaret.mcleod@vsnw.org.uk)

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16<sup>th</sup> January 2006

Dear Colleague

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Please find below a short survey which we would be pleased if you could complete and **return by Tuesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006**. You can complete the survey online and return via email, or print it off and post it to the above address

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If you would like your comments to remain non-attributable in the final report please indicate in the 'Other Comments' box at the end of the survey.

If you would like to discuss the survey please contact **Margaret McLeod** on 0161 276 9303 or email [margaret.mcleod@vsnw.org.uk](mailto:margaret.mcleod@vsnw.org.uk). I would also like to follow up the survey with some organisations and will contact you to discuss this.

**Local Area Agreement Survey**

<b>Name of Organisation</b>	
<b>Your name</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>	
<b>Email</b>	

**Developing the Local Area Agreement**

1.	Did you proactively become involved with Local Area Agreements, or were you asked by your LSP / local authority to become involved? Please comment.		
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Appendix B

2.	Does the local voluntary and community sector have a 'COMPACT' with the LSP or local authority? If YES, has it been useful in helping you engage with the LAA. Please comment	YES	NO
3.	If you are a VCS organisation representing the voluntary and community sector on the Local Area Agreement in an overarching role do you feed back to the wider VCS? Please say how you do this, or if not what is the reason.	YES	NO
4.	If you have a representational role on one of the themed blocks, do you feed back to other vcs organisations with similar interests to yours? Please comment.	YES	NO
5.	Are you involved in negotiating on the delivery of one or more outcomes on one of the LAA themed blocks for your own organisation? Please comment on whether it is a single block or a cross-cutting theme.	YES	NO
6.	In developing the LAA, have strong links been made to other policy initiatives, in particular Change Up. Please comment.	Yes	NO
7.	If you are an organisation representing the VCS on the LAA have you held any events locally to explain Local Area Agreements to local voluntary and community groups? If YES, please give brief details.	YES	NO
8.	If you are an umbrella organisation, how are you ensuring that BME organisations, rural communities, and other communities of interest such as age, disability, sexuality, gender, faith are engaged / aware of the LAA? Please comment.		
9.	Is the LAA recognising the contribution that BME organisations and the other communities of interest make to the cross-cutting themes? Please comment.	YES	NO

Appendix B

10.	Are you aware of any other VCS organisations involved in developing the LAA in your area? If YES, can you say which organisation(s)	YES	NO
11.	Do you feedback on the development of the Local Area Agreement to your sub-regional Change Up Consortia? If NO, please say why.	YES	NO
12.	Have you received any resources or support to enable you to engage as an equal partner in the LAA process? If YES, please comment, or if you asked and were refused please comment.	YES	NO
13.	If you represent the VCS at a strategic level on the LAA have you been involved in any meetings between the LSP and Government Office North West regarding the development of the LAA. Please comment	YES	NO
14.	Has your organisation been involved in developing the Statement of Involvement by the voluntary and community sector? Please comment.	YES	NO
<b>Taking the LAA Forward</b>			
15.	Do you know what role you will play in the delivery and future development of the LAA? Please comment?		
16.	Do you know if the VCS will have a role in monitoring the performance of the Local Area Agreement? Please comment.	YES	NO

Appendix B

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

**Please complete and return this questionnaire by 31st January 2006**

Many thanks for taking the time to complete the questionnaire and if you have any questions please contact Margaret McLeod – details below.

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FOR THE NORTH WEST**

**VSNW  
VOLUNTARY SECTOR  
NORTH WEST**