



progress through partnership

## SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES IN THE SOUTH EAST

Progress through Partnerships (PtP) is the south-east region's capacity building programme for Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). It is funded by Improvement and Efficiency South East – the regional improvement and efficiency partnership for the south-east.

PtP offers a news and information service, funding, and a range of events and resources to every LSP in the South East. It facilitates the exchange of information, experience and expertise between LSPs and supports LSPs in managing their own development and learning from best practice.

### WHAT ROLE DO LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS PLAY?

Local Strategic Partnerships are central to effective local leadership and are a key vehicle for securing the involvement of local partners in agreeing and delivering local priorities. They are a recognition that no single local body has all the answers and that joint working can deliver better outcomes for local people.

In drawing up a local Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for their area, LSP partners develop a comprehensive overview of local needs and identify local priorities and strategies for delivery. The strength of their vision; their

ability to spot the opportunities and threats for their local area; and their commitment to mobilise their collective resources are critical to the area's future prospects.

LSPs provide a forum for co-ordinating partners' consultation and engagement activities with local communities, and provide a route through which people can call local agencies to account. With the demand for even greater efficiency savings across public services, especially in the wake of the recession, LSPs can help public agencies offer better value for money by joining up and pooling their resources.



For up to date information about the latest PtP activities, visit our website [www.progressthroughpartnership.org.uk](http://www.progressthroughpartnership.org.uk)

## STRENGTH IN PARTNERSHIP IN THE SOUTH EAST

### Key stages of LSP development

LSPs' development needs are specific to local circumstances and the maturity of the partnership. Partnerships' self-assessments and use of PtP support funding show that they are at very different stages of development in terms of their capacity, performance and effectiveness. The evidence highlights different stages in LSPs' development, with clear characteristics at each stage.

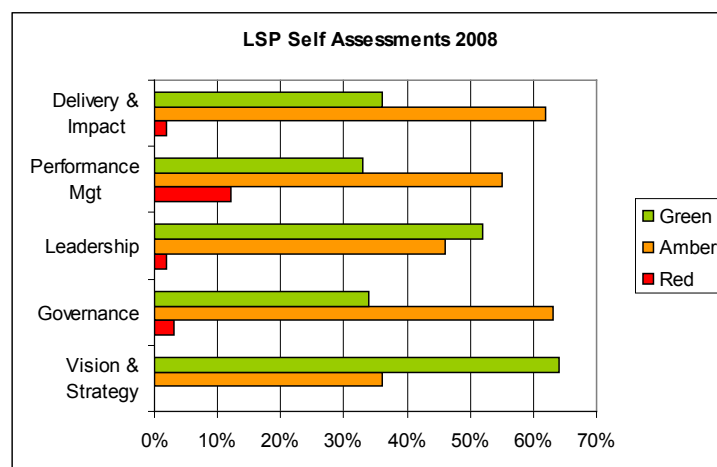
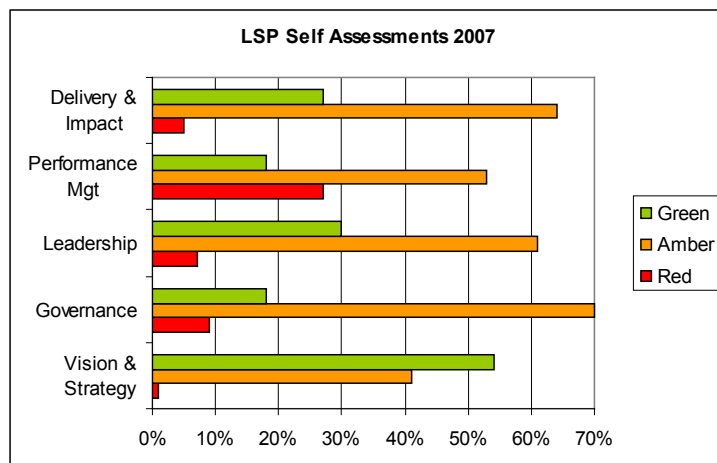
The more effective LSPs have a clear vision and are able to translate this into effective delivery. They tend to have secure governance, strong leadership, clear roles and responsibilities and senior 'champions' – high profile, respected individuals who promote the benefits of partnership working and help secure wider buy-in.

Those LSPs which are least developed are still trying to secure consensus around a clear vision and are struggling to deliver tangible outcomes on the ground. They tend to have weaker governance structures and have key local partners missing from their membership. They are largely perceived as little more than 'talking shops'.

LSPs in-between are making steady progress. They generally have a vision and are working to translate this into clear activities and outcomes. They have one or more areas of development, e.g. to improve governance arrangements or put in place stronger performance management of their LAA. The issues that these LSPs face are largely around two-tier working, delivering tangible outcomes and demonstrating impact.

LSPs across the South East are making an important contribution to delivering on local priorities and improving outcomes for local people.

PtP supports LSPs to assess their own development needs each year. These self-assessments show that partnerships have made considerable progress in growing their capacity and are in a stronger position than ever to deliver on local priorities.



### MORE EFFECTIVE

- Some areas of weakness, but aware of these and have clear strategies for tackling them
- The LSP has some areas of excellence and innovation
- 'Getting by' but with one or more areas of weakness
- May not have a good understanding of their weaknesses
- No development plan / lack of capacity for dealing with weaknesses
- Weak governance framework
- High turnover of membership
- No SCS or weak ownership of SCS
- Poor community engagement
- Unclear priorities and mechanisms to secure delivery of LAA targets

### DEVELOPING

## KEY SUCCESS CRITERIA FOR LSPS

- ✓ **Developing a strong vision for a local area** – A genuine shared vision reflects real engagement with local people and has buy-in from – and ownership of – all partners and the local community. This involves capturing and analysing data and using this to inform prioritisation of resources.
- ✓ **Establishing robust governance and performance management frameworks** – Partnerships need clear roles and accountabilities for delivery and managing risk at all levels. This means building effective engagement between the strategic partnership and the various thematic and local partnerships.
- ✓ **Understanding the policy landscape** – For many partners - particularly non-statutory ones - the fast-changing policy landscape is at best confusing and at worst a bureaucratic maze. Many partners consequently struggle to engage effectively and feel disengaged from the process.
- ✓ **Engaging their local communities** – Partnerships need to engage local people in a dialogue about the future of their area and how best to prioritise and tackle local issues. Good partnerships harness local expertise and energy to address problems and realise the full potential of an area.
- ✓ **Adapting to a new delivery role** - LSPs need to translate their strategic priorities, as set out in the SCS and LAA, into real change on the ground. To do so, they need practical and achievable delivery plans with clear outputs, milestones, roles and responsibilities and named leads.
- ✓ **Managing competing pressures** - Partners on the LSP have their own organisational priorities and targets, which compete for their time and attention. The challenge is to ensure that the LSP and LAA are not seen as an 'add-on to the day job', but as one of the main ways of addressing partners' own priorities.
- ✓ **Balancing leadership v. partnerships** - Local authorities face the challenge of being the 'first among equals'. They have a community leadership role to fulfil – through place-making and scrutiny and as the accountable body for the LAA and LDF. They must also work in partnership, 'inform, consult and involve' stakeholders and empower their communities.
- ✓ **Engaging elected members in LSPs** – Councillor engagement ensures that LSPs are effectively linked into council democratic decision-making and scrutiny structures and provides the link between LSPs and communities at neighbourhood and ward level.
- ✓ **'Selling' partnership working to partners** – LSPs need secure buy-in from a wide range of agencies. Many struggle particularly to engage elected members and representatives from the voluntary, community sector and business sector.
- ✓ **Building trust among partners** – Getting a good cross-section of partners involved in the LSP is only the first step. LSPs need to build real trust between partners and engage all partners equally, with clear roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ **Embedding change in mainstream services** – Successful LSPs move beyond 'projects' and programme money; they influence mainstream services, helping to embed change and ensure sustainable improvements.
- ✓ **Demonstrating impact** – LSPs need to identify clear, measurable outcomes and be able to attribute these to particular interventions.

## CHALLENGES FACING LSPS IN THE SOUTH EAST

Most partnership challenges are not unique to one region. However, the social, economic and political landscape of the region gives rise to some particular challenges for South East LSPs.

### A large and diverse economy

The regional economy is the strongest in the country after London. However, the South East is predicted to be one of the regions worst hit by the recession, with up to 280,000 net job losses anticipated by 2010. This will lead to a likely shift in local priorities and LSPs will need to be proactive in responding to the changing agenda – focusing on boosting the least vulnerable industries and maximising opportunities such as the 2012 Olympics.

### A growing and changing population

The South East is undergoing rapid growth. Its population is growing and becoming older, with increasing in-flows of migrant workers. This puts increasing pressure on public services. The region has ambitious annual targets of over 10,000 affordable homes, but housing completions and starts are predicted to fall to their lowest levels since 1945 due to the recession.

## HOW CAN PTP HELP?

As well as offering a core service which promotes effective practice and supports strong peer networks, PtP aims to provide responsive and flexible resources that offer LSPs targeted support where it is most needed and will have most impact.

This year, PtP support has included regular regional and sub-regional events; a series of case studies on partnership activities; a DVD showcasing good partnership working; a series of learning modules for elected members on partnership-related issues; a roundtable discussion on migrant workers for strategic partners; and two regional conferences attended by over 80 people.

PtP has also provided direct financial support to LSPs, via its Central Fund, which LSPs can use to support their own specific development needs. Examples of work being taken forward by the PtP Central Fund:

- **Milton Keynes** – Developing partnership risk management approaches in relation to delivery of the SCS and LAA targets
- **Ashford** – A Local Action Plan for Ashford to form part of the Kent Agreement (LAA) and to raise awareness of the role of district LSP partners in delivering the LAA
- **Reading 2020** – An external review to ensure that delivery structures linking the LSP and targets within the LAA are fit for purpose

### Environmental pressures

The region requires adequate infrastructure investment to meet the transport needs of a growing population, but also faces pressures to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and deliver more sustainable transport options. An anticipated growth in aviation traffic and possible expansion of Heathrow or Gatwick airport will place further environmental pressures on the region. The region's location also means many areas are at risk of coastal erosion and flooding.

### Two-tier governance

Most of the South East is covered by two-tier local governance structures. Of the 74 local authorities, 55 are districts and 7 are counties, with only 12 unitaries. LSPs in the two-tier areas face particular challenges, e.g. managing the high number of partners, competing priorities, individual identities of places and additional layers of governance.

## FUTURE PTP PROGRAMME

PtP is entering an exciting new phase. A new two-year programme will begin in Spring 2009 offering an extensive menu of capacity-building resources.

PtP will build on its achievements and redouble its efforts to provide LSPs with support that meets both their individual and collective needs.

In designing this future programme, we asked practitioners what they wanted to see from PtP and what support they would value most.

### Suggestions included:

Ongoing support becoming more specific to our needs

Highlighting threats to partnership working and how they can be overcome

Support from Practitioner Associates

Peer Mentoring

Sharing practical examples of best practice

Knowledge exchange

### The new programme will include:

A core 'regional knowledge gateway' of support and exchange of information and effective practice.

Including:

- Dedicated area lead for each LSP closely integrated with support for sub-regional networks of LSP managers and Chairs.
- Information sharing through newsletters, newswires, case studies, and 'how to' guides aimed at Councillors, LSP board members, and practitioners.
- A core programme of learning and knowledge-sharing events including an annual conference and sub-regional workshops which address current 'hot issues'.
- Recruitment and on-going support for a pool of practitioner associates (PAs), with a particular focus in developing more Elected Member PAs across the Unitary and two tier area.

The Central Fund linked to an annual self-assessment

- Annual self-assessment
- Support for individual LSPs through a central fund with some clear models for the kinds of activity this can pay for

A range of Targeted Activities which are responsive to the changing needs of LSPs in the region and focus on improving the performance of LSPs with specific development needs and capturing effective practice and innovation.

- A ring fenced development fund to provide additional support to LSPs facing particular challenges.
- A 'menu' of targeted support that can be used by both individual LSPs and groups of LSPs with shared issues/needs as well as specific support for elected members.

