

Capacity building & development needs of Hampshire's Local Strategic Partnerships

A report for the
Association of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Authorities

March 2004

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Executive Summary

Across the country, there is a significant learning and developmental gap amongst those people most closely engaged in working in or with LSP's, with Hampshire being no exception. This reflects the fact that LSP's are being asked to understand and be proficient in what for many, is a relatively or completely new agenda, ways of working and mind set.

This learning and development gap is a real barrier to the effective functioning of LSP's.

The deficiency in relevant skills and knowledge is evenly spread across all sectors and at all levels of seniority within partner organisations.

There is great potential to improve the situation, through not only the proposed pilot programme and accompanying funding provided by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), but also:

- Through strong coordination and collaboration across sectors and LSP's.
- By making better use of existing resources
- By senior players taking a concerted lead in supporting learning and development across LSP's in Hampshire.

Any learning and development relevant to LSP's will also give the individuals involved learning and skills transferable to their 'day jobs'.

Summary of LSP's learning & developmental needs

- a. To better understand and develop a shared, holistic picture of their area.
- b. To have an improved understanding of partner organisations' ways of operating and culture
- c. To understand the basics of, private, community and voluntary sectors – each sector's different ways of operating and culture.
- d. Basic facts on Community Planning / Neighbourhood Renewal – few people at the LSP table have a sufficiently in-depth or wide-ranging grasp of Community Planning in its entirety.
- e. Effective partnership & collaborative working – there is a lack of knowledge (theoretical and practical) on what makes for effective partnership working.
- f. Supporting LSP's – the very particular skills and knowledge needed to be an effective partnership supporter and manager
- g. Strategic, collaborative planning & implementation – the theory and practice of how to work in a context of multi-agency strategic planning, complexity, constant change and working with influence and negotiation as the principle tools.
- h. Performance management – a basic knowledge of and ability to work with a performance management framework.
- i. Engaging stakeholders – increased understanding of the complexity and breadth of engaging stakeholders as a topic and that a strategic approach must be developed by the LSP. Also planning and running collaborative stakeholder processes that lead to changed practice.
- j. Planning & running participative meetings – awareness of different types of meetings and events and their relative benefits; better meetings in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of what is achieved.
- k. Support for Chairs – addressing the specific learning and developmental needs of LSP Chairs and Vice-Chairs
- l. Induction for new members - ensuring new members receive realistic support in order to reach the collective learning and development level of their LSP colleagues.

Summary of recommendations

Overarching

1. Ensure that the necessary levels of coordination and collaboration proposed in this report occur, through proper recognition, support and funding for the coordination and collaboration function. This is both across LSP's and between the pilot programme's funded activities and existing capacity building activities of all kinds.
2. Take steps to ensure that there is widespread senior buy-in to the capacity building programme, including leading by example.
3. Make use of the significant existing learning activities across a very wide range of sectors, organisations and topics, which can be tapped into by LSP's.
4. Encourage LSP's to 'match fund', either for the totality of or for elements of the pilot programme.

Specific

5. Appoint a post-holder or holders to carry out the substantial additional work relating to coordination, collaboration and to setting up new activities and in order to bring additional expertise and experience on learning and partnership development into the programme overall
6. Seek ways to strengthen the emerging LSP practitioners' network, to support its important learning and development function. Ensure the programme is tightly tied into the work of the Network, not running in parallel.
7. Promote and support action learning as a key plank for building capacity. Each LSP could be allocated a sum of money to be spent on action learning.
8. Hold a dialogue process to establish whether there is an appetite and sufficient resource to set up one or more Learning Lab initiatives
9. Ringfence funds or seek some other incentive to support each LSP undertaking its own self-managed developmental work during the life of the programme.
10. Develop a Hampshire-wide programme of 'basic briefings', delivered by a team developed for the purpose.
11. Commission and run some training on generically useful topics
12. Ensure that LSP Chairs and Vice-Chairs receive specific and personally tailored developmental input.
13. Seek to set up coaching, mentoring or buddying opportunities within and across LSP's.
14. Seek to set up secondment and shadowing arrangements within and across LSP's.
15. Establish systematic induction processes for new members in all LSP's
16. Be sure to exploit learning and development opportunities as they arise.

1 Introduction

This report has been commissioned by the Association of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Local Authorities. Its primary purpose is to inform and guide an Office of the Deputy Prime Minister funded programme of capacity building, to run from April 2004 – October 2005, for Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP) across Hampshire.

The report draws on the following sources:

- The author's experience of working with LSP's across the country, over the past four years. This includes significant experience of capacity building with LSP's.
- The author's experience of working with several LSP 's within Hampshire
- Research findings on capacity building for partnerships in general and for Local Strategic Partnership's in particular. (For list of sources see section 9).
- Feedback from a workshop event attended by forty members and practitioners from Hampshire's LSP's.
- Face to face meetings with a cross-section of ten LSP members and support officers
- Phone interviews with a sample of people in and working with Hampshire's LSP's, across sectors and organisations.

1.1 Definitions

Community Planning, Neighbourhood Renewal and LSP's all have their own official and unofficial language, acronyms and jargon. Much confusion is being caused by the fact that the same term is used to mean different things in different places – for example, the term 'LSP' carries completely different meanings in different places, sometimes referring to an amorphous collection of a hundred or so organisations, sometimes used to mean a tight group of a dozen people.

Equally, the words 'training' and 'capacity building' are heavily used and have now come to mean very different things in different settings. It is therefore important to have an agreed basis for what all these terms mean in the context of this report. This will also be true of any subsequent activities based on the report. The meanings attached to terms in this report are set out here.

Training and Capacity building

The ultimate purpose of any capacity building activities for LSP's is to help them become and continue to be, *effective, efficient partnerships, achieving appropriate, agreed goals*

If this is agreed to be the main purpose of a capacity building programme, then we would argue that 'training' and 'capacity building' should be interpreted very widely because the range of skills and knowledge required by LSP's to be effective is also very broad; (see section 5) This broad interpretation of 'capacity building and training' is the approach taken in this report.

Equally, care must be taken to avoid making assumptions when these terms are used. For example, for some, the word 'training' has developed quite negative connotations and is conceived as just one thing - one trainer and a group of people in a room being given information. In fact, 'training' can cover a much more comprehensive set of activities; (see section 6).

(LSP) Development

Development is here taken to refer to the range of developmental activities that any partnership must pro-actively undertake if it is to move from being a loose collection of people, into an efficient, effective partnership which is adding value and achieving more than the sum of its parts.

LSP

As already noted, the term LSP is used across the country to refer to very different things – in some areas, it means the central ‘core group; in others, is it used to refer to a whole constellation of existing partnerships, working groups, wider Networks and so on. For the purposes of this report, *LSP is taken to mean the decision-making, lead body only*, and not an extremely wide range of groups and people who may formally be on a list labelled ‘LSP’, but who have little or no practical engagement with the process and whose learning needs in relation to Community Planning are therefore very different to the LSP’s.

‘Greater LSP’

Many of the LSP’s learning needs will also apply to people who are closely involved with it, through such things as working groups, or through existing partnerships that work closely with their LSP. We assume that any programme set up to support learning within LSP’s, will automatically need to consider extending that at least elements of the learning to those most closely involved with the LSP.

‘LSP supporter’ or LSP support officer,

Here means those officers who spend part or all of their day job actively working with the LSP, but who are not members of it.

Key organisational players

This refers to people who may have no official role at all in relation to the LSP in terms of holding a seat or being on a working group, but who individually or collectively, have a great actual or potential influence on the LSP. This includes:

- The most senior officers of the LSP’s constituent organisations.
- For local authorities, the Cabinet and backbench councillors; for the voluntary sector or PCT’s, lead Board members.
- Lead players from existing significant partnerships

2 Context for capacity building in Hampshire

Hampshire contains fifteen separate Local Strategic Partnerships, each of which is based on the relevant local authority geographical boundaries.

LSP name	Local authority area covered
Hampshire Strategic Partnership	Hampshire County Council
Networkfareham	Fareham Borough Council
Basingstoke & Deane Local Strategic Partnership	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Test Valley Partnership	Test Valley Borough Council
Rushmoor Strategic Partnership	Rushmoor Borough Council
East Hampshire Local Strategic Partnership	East Hampshire District Council
The Changing Lives Partnership	New Forest District Council
Havant Local Strategic Partnership	Havant Borough Council
Eastleigh Strategic Partnership	Eastleigh Borough Council
Winchester & District Working Together	Winchester City Council
Hart Community Partnership Steering Group.	Hart Council
Gosport Partnership	Gosport
Portsmouth Local Strategic Partnership	Portsmouth City Council (Unitary)
Island Futures	Isle of Wight Council (Unitary)
Southampton Partnership	Southampton City Council (Unitary)

There are several points to consider in relation to this list.

- Two LSP's (Portsmouth and Southampton) are in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and therefore have to comply with substantive guidance, targets and processes, including on learning and skills development. Differences, in terms of capacity building, between these two LSP's and the others, are dealt with in 3.1
- There are 3 unitary authorities, with the remainder being 'two tier' local government areas
- Within one relatively contained geographical area, there are 15 LSP's. This represents a significant opportunity for shared learning and a significant shared potential resource base to support that learning.
- The length of the time that the LSP's have been fully up and running varies substantially – with a difference of around two years between the earliest and latest.

3 Factors influencing capacity building needs

The capacity building needs of any LSP are determined by a complex mix of factors. These are set out in some detail in this section. We suggest that as decisions come to be made about who is going to be offered what kind of support through the pilot, an appreciation of these contextual factors will be useful in tailoring the detail of delivery to individual and collective needs.

3.1 The setting in which the LSP operates

An interesting question for this study was whether the two LSP's dealing with Neighbourhood Renewal have additional or different learning and developmental needs to the other LSP's in Hampshire. The feedback from those consulted and our own experience suggests that in terms of learning and developmental needs, the only significant difference was that LSP's engaged with Neighbourhood Renewal have an additional need to understand, in considerable depth, the whole agenda of neighbourhood level deprivation, regeneration, the past history of regeneration and so on. However, any LSP with an area with containing significant areas of deprivation would also do well to learn more about these subjects.

The Neighbourhood Renewal funding also imposes learning needs related to obligatory processes and mechanisms, such as using the Performance Management Framework, or Project Cycle Management. Again, these tools are actually also relevant and useful to other LSP's, although this may be less apparent at present since few have yet engaged in delivery to any extent.

Another difference to consider is whether LSP's operating with a unitary local authority, as opposed to those operating with a two-tier local government system, have any different learning needs. The answer to that was a firm 'no'. The LSP's across Hampshire are starting to take a clear line that their interaction is about LSP to LSP working, not local authority to local authority. This approach reduces or even removes the significance of having two tiers of local government at the LSP table.

3.2 Individuals' skills & knowledge

Everyone brings their widely varying 'baggage' to a partnership, including their experience, or not, of successful partnerships, attitudes to and knowledge of the organisations and sectors. Research findings on partnership working repeatedly emphasise the significance of individual personalities and skills. Where absolutely key players, for example, the LSP support officer(s) are lacking important skills and knowledge, this has a disproportionately damaging effect on the performance of the LSP.

3.3 Organisational cultures & histories of partners

This is a significant influencing factor. For example, some local authorities have a more positive experience of and pro-active attitude towards partnership working than others. Ancient and recent history is also important, for example, the success of otherwise of other partnership initiatives in the area. It is striking when working with individuals who have not been exposed to a robust, successful partnership, just how hard it can be for those people to visualise the 'beast' that they are trying to create, or even to believe in effective partnership as a concept.

3.4 Maturity of partnership

All partnerships, other than completely unsuccessful ones, move through a sequence of stages of maturity and development. These stages have been characterised as 'form, frustrate, function, fly'¹. In addition to these stages of development, all partnerships should also (but don't always) move around a cycle of visioning, discussing and agreeing objectives, working up actions, delivering actions, then monitoring and review, leading into a second iteration of the cycle.

The Hampshire LSP's are at fairly different stages in their cycles of maturity, with some LSP's set up a full two years ahead of others, and some making faster progress than others. 'Progress' is moreover patchy even within an LSP, ie each LSP has areas where it is doing rather well and areas where things are less successful.

The 'maturity' of an LSP will be a key factor in determining whether capacity building is taken seriously and also what kind of capacity building will be most appropriate.

In our experience, a mature LSP or one which is feeling successful, will be more inclined to commit time and resources to capacity building because:

- Partners see that a successful LSP is of benefit to their organisation and are therefore genuinely committed to making it work.
- Shared experience to date has spread better shared understanding of the partnership's need to continue to learn and develop and the benefits reaped from pro-actively developing the LSP. Partners are therefore prepared to commit time and resources to capacity building.
- Understanding of the kinds of things that 'capacity building' implies, is increased and then many people see that skills and knowledge acquired through working on or with their LSP are directly transferable to their own jobs and organisations.
- All of the above points mean that the LSP is more likely to agree to jointly resource capacity building activities.

Such an LSP might consider a residential away day for example, or agree to build a reflective session into each of its meetings.

In contrast, for LSP's that are still in their early stages, with lower levels of trust and understanding, getting any kind of commitment to capacity building can be a real struggle. There are several reasons for this:

- Partners do not yet have real faith in the LSP or of the benefits it might bring to their organisation / stakeholders. This leads to a natural unwillingness to commit any further time or resources, over and above basic meetings.
- In 'immature LSP's', resourcing of the LSP 's own partnership process has typically not yet been addressed and only the local authority has put money on the table. In such a situation, additional costs of capacity building can be unattractive to a local authority that is already shouldering all financial costs.
- Struggling LSP's often have little understanding of how partnerships must be 'grown' and that this requires investment. They blame their failure on individuals and specific circumstances, rather than on a collective need to develop themselves.

¹ From *Self-assessment tool for partnership*. www.idea.gov.uk

For LSP's where some or all of the above points are true, any capacity building process needs to work within this often hostile environment. This means finding ways to make capacity building both acceptable (short, sharp, regular input, rather than one big 'training day' for example) and if necessary 'invisible', ie capacity building by stealth in the initial stages, until partners have reached a stage of sufficient understanding to be able to deal openly with the subject.

3.5 Capacity building as an understood topic

The whole idea of 'capacity building for LSP's' suffers from not yet being part of the daily language and culture of those people and organisations at whom it is aimed. The learning needs for LSP's (as set out in section 5), often have an equally low profile as learning and development needs within the partner organisations.

This leads to the problem of people 'not knowing what they don't know'. If you have no concept that partnership working has a whole body of knowledge and skills associated with it, and you think its simply a matter of all getting in a room together, then you are less likely to understand that there is a serious gap in your own capacity to do a good job as a member of or supporting officer to a partnership. In other words, there is as yet no widespread instinctive and automatic understanding that LSP's all have developmental needs and that these are an ongoing feature of partnership life.

Any capacity building programme must therefore deal with this specific problem of first having to expand people's ideas of the skills and knowledge they need and the benefits that enhanced understanding and skills will bring, in order to establish strong motivation around gaining such skills and knowledge.

An important lever here will be the fact that every single aspect of capacity building in this report will produce people who have enhanced, transferable skills, which can be taken back to their own organisations.

3.6 A learning and development culture

Another barrier to developing an effective capacity building programme for LSP's is the fact that few organisations enjoy a true 'learning culture'. A 'learning culture' can be characterised as one where there is an acceptance of:

- Making mistakes but learning from them
- Not being afraid to say 'I/ we really don't understand that',
- The need to take every opportunity to learn from what you have just done; building in a reflective approach
- The importance of learning and the flexibility that comes from learning, for a partnership (or organisation) which is trying to work in a context of constant change and complexity

The need to raise the understanding and profile of 'taking a learning approach' is addressed in the recommendations section.

4 Who needs what learning?

The capacity building programme will need to pay attention to *who* is receiving *what* particular types of learning and developmental attention. Several different 'target audiences' can be identified, each of which will have some shared but also some specific learning and developmental needs. The specific meaning attached to each term below is set out in section 1.1.

Target audiences with specific needs include:

- LSP members
- Those active within the 'Greater LSP' ie the LSP's associated working groups, topic groups, forums etc
- LSP supporters
- Chairs & Vice-Chairs of LSP's
- Key organisational players (across sectors)
- Regional or sub-regional staff who are closely involved with LSP's, e.g. GOSE and Association of Hampshire Isle Of Wight Local Authorities.

This report does not cover any capacity building needs for those people outside these stakeholder groups, for example, residents. In our view, this pilot should focus firmly on the first circle of influence because unless LSP's get their own learning and therefore performance more on track than it currently is, the chances of meaningful capacity building outside that circle of influence are limited.

With limited resources, it will be important to also consider prioritising who receives what kind of support. It may be possible and desirable to set, for at least some of the provision, 'entry criteria'. For example, a regeneration partnership offered training on project cycle management, which was intensive and expensive. The entry criterion for the training was that anyone attending had to be prepared to run a simplified version of the training in their organisation. This was found to be a satisfactory way of sorting out the 'training junkies' from those who are ready to do something with their learning.

Another way of prioritising and making good use of resources is to distinguish between beginners and more advanced learners for any given topic – each group will generally get more from the training if attending with people at a similar level of understanding and experience.

5 What are the learning & skills needs of LSP's?

5.1 Knowledge & information gaps

The distinguishing feature of this area of learning is that people are lacking basic information, rather than skills. This means it is a relatively easier gap to plug. However, whilst some of the information is amenable to being put across in straightforward ways (by for example, written briefing notes), other types of information are actually more about knowledge, ie information plus some experience and insights.

It has been our consistent experience that most LSP members, together with the officers supporting them and key players outside the immediate circle, are all lacking serious 'chunks' of basic information. Interviewees repeatedly acknowledged that they were missing some basic information. The main information gaps are set out in this section.

5.2 Knowing what LSP's need to know about

An important consideration in planning a capacity building programme, is drawing a line between:

- Those areas of knowledge which the LSP needs to have themselves. For example, all LSP members must have a sound understanding of the basics of the Community Planning agenda.
- Those areas of knowledge which the LSP doesn't need to know about in detail, but must understand enough about to 'know that they don't know' and that they must therefore call in people with greater knowledge and expertise. We have seen many LSP meetings struggling to have discussions on topics for which they are patently not qualified to have a discussion, such is their lack of understanding or knowledge. Yet they are not aware of this gap themselves, or that they could and should call in other people who do have the necessary skills and knowledge.

5.3 Members' knowledge of each other

To be an effective partnership, everyone around the table needs to have some knowledge about all the other partners. This is a simple but fundamental capacity building need for any partnership. Our experience suggests that even this basic step is often neglected, with members having only the dimmest idea of each other's 'day jobs' or skills. It is not uncommon to find LSP 's where people don't even know each other's names. Members need to know about:

- Each person's role in their organisation
- Their areas of expertise and experience; (and this applies as much to 'volunteers' at the LSP table as to professional officers, Board members and councillors).
- Any important networks (formal or informal) that they are part of
- As the partnership matures, a better understanding of people's idiosyncrasies, strengths and weaknesses will become important.
- Contact details

5.4 Knowledge of their own area

LSP members and key organisational officers each bring a very partial picture of the area covered by the LSP and of the social, economic and geographical variations within it. Whilst this can be addressed to some extent through collecting and sharing hard and soft data, interviewees felt that there was an important human and experiential level at which LSP members needed to build their awareness of their own area.

Examples of how this might be (and is being done) included holding LSP meetings in different areas and types of venues; asking the LSP to arrive by public transport to a particular meeting to illustrate the transport problems of that area, and so on; asking people to 'tell their story' at LSP meetings, to give a strong personal picture of an issue or area.

5.5 Knowledge of the partner organisations

LSP members also need a basic idea about how each of the organisations around the LSP table works. "Partnerships need to develop a common language that does not assume that partners understand the complexities of how formal structures and organisations in one another's sectors work".² For example, knowing more about:

- How each organisation's funding and budget processes work, as well any additional funding processes such as European or Regional Development Agency funds
- Decision-making processes and what authority each organisation has, over whom. This should include explaining the very particular demands of the political process which local authorities have to work with, as these are often poorly understood by LSP partners.
- The organisational politics (small 'p') of each organisation
- An idea of each organisation's key strategies, priorities and plans
- What important networks each organisation is engaged in

5.6 Knowledge of different sectors

LSP members and their supporters need a good understanding of each of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. This was expressed by participants at the January 2004 workshop event as being able to "walk in their shoes". This means gaining an understanding of such things as :

- What each sectoral 'label' actually means. In particular, the differences between the voluntary and community sectors need to be brought out.
- The kinds of organisations that sector comprises. Our research shows that this will be by no means obvious to others outside that sector.
- The typical organisational culture or cultures and motivations of that sector. For example, understanding that the voluntary sector tends to be values-driven, or for the private sector, the cultural differences between large companies and small and medium sized enterprises.
- The typical constraints and opportunities faced by each sector. For example, the voluntary sector understanding the fact that local authorities and PCT's have many nationally imposed targets.
- The typical protocols and processes in each sector.

Research has shown that when partnerships review why they have succeeded or failed, investing in mutual understanding of each other, particularly in the early stages of partnership, is seen as a key to success. Failure to do this means that the partnership can struggle to even get beyond 'forming' into more productive phases. Shared understanding of each other's situations is the essential basis for building trust, patience (because you understand why someone is behaving in a particular way) and for starting to see how the partnership can benefit everyone around the table.

² GOSE Seminar paper no 5: Strategic Leadership.Shared Intelligence / GOSE. March 2002.

5.7 Basic facts on Community Planning / Neighbourhood Renewal

There are still significant numbers of LSP's, of support officers and of lead local authority officers and members, who do not actually have a full grasp of:

- The main 'spirit of', drivers and purposes underlying the Community Planning agenda – that is, the national agenda, *not only* how it is being interpreted locally.
- Specific details of direct relevance to the LSP, such as the drive to promote environmental, economic and social wellbeing or the new power of wellbeing.
- How almost all 'silo' topics link in some way and why work on apparently irrelevant topic can be of benefit to an LSP partner. As an interviewee put it ;'helping people who work in transport to understand why public health is now *'their' topic too, and vice versa*'.
- The fact that this is whole way of working and a mindset, rather than a series of 'tickboxes'
- The role of an LSP and what it means to sit on one. This would include all of the tasks that an LSP is supposed to undertake – many LSP's have yet to grasp their full role or that it extends beyond writing a Community Strategy.
- The LSP's regional role – an increasingly significant one, but little addressed at LSP level to date. This would include better understanding of how to engage effectively with the many national and regional bodies who rarely sit on LSP's, but who are key stakeholders for many LSP aims.
- What 'mainstreaming' actually means ie implementation through existing organisational spending, not through small discretionary amounts allocated to LSP 'projects'.
- The strategic and decision-making role of an LSP
- The overall concept and details of performance management as it relates to Community Strategies and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies.
- For Neighbourhood Renewal LSP's, the basics about neighbourhood renewal as a topic in its own right. Also the whole funding basis for Neighbourhood Renewal, for those don't already understand this.

This lack of basic understanding is significant as without it, each LSP develops its own, very partial and 'skewed' sense of what it is supposed to be doing. It also means that many LSP's exist in a continual fog of confusion. We have never yet worked with an LSP where all the members were anything like fully briefed on the overall context in which they were operating ie an understanding of all of the above bullet points.

A key principle for effective partnership working is that partners have shared levels of information and knowledge on key aspects of their joint work. If an LSP has a significant number of people who are simply not 'up to speed' on the basics, they will exert a disproportionately negative effect on the partnership as a whole, slowing down discussions, lacking commitment (because they lack understanding) and regularly getting hold of the wrong end of multiple sticks.

5.8 Partnership & collaborative working

Many (but not all) of the problems experienced by LSP's are actually generic partnership problems, commonly found in multi-organisational partnerships.

There is a body of knowledge and skills which can be summed up as 'knowing how to make partnerships effective'. This includes such issues as:

- Understanding why and how partnerships need to invest in their own development.
- Different kinds of partnership 'models' and how to ensure that structures are 'fit for purpose'. This includes how to set up and support 'sub-groups' and the like
- The different stages of partnership and the particular needs of each stage
- The kind of personal and organisational behaviours that partnership requires, from how to behave at a meeting, to the different approaches to communication that are needed.
- How to handle sensitive issues, tough decision and conflict in a partnership setting
- What communication needs a partnership has
- Developing and using partnership agreements / protocols
- What managing and supporting a partnership entails and different approaches to these substantial tasks
- How to keep partners happy and on board
- Relationships between the partnership members, the partnership as a whole and the partner organisations and their LSP representative

Our experience of working with partnerships in general has led us to believe that it is the widespread absence of knowledge and skills on these topics, that has given so many LSP's a shaky start. Almost every interviewee commented on the general lack of knowledge about partnership working as a topic. Building some solid knowledge and skills on effective partnership working would be an invaluable and we think essential plank in any capacity building programme.

The fact that the new Performance Management Framework from ODPM allows for evaluation of the partnership itself, as well as of the things it achieves, should help bring partnership as a process into the spotlight and provide a useful focus for any training on partnership.

5.9 Supporting LSP's

The role and tasks associated with supporting LSP's are not widely discussed or understood, yet it is a peculiarly demanding role, requiring a range of skills and expertise across both process (facilitation, brokering, running effective meetings) and content (knowing enough about a bit of just about every main topic to be able to make sense of the basics of social, environmental and economic wellbeing).

The way the role is carried out varies widely across LSP's, from one often very over-burdened officer, to a multi-agency 'virtual team'. The skills, expertise and seniority of those involved is also strikingly different, with accordingly different results.

The capacity building programme therefore needs to find ways of:

- Increasing understanding, especially at senior levels, of what 'support for the LSP' actually entails.
- Sharing best practice on the different approaches used – what works and what doesn't, how partners can be persuaded to share the burden of support and so on.

5.10 Strategic, collaborative planning & implementation

LSP's are in the business of multi-organisational, strategic planning, implementation and monitoring. Research constantly underlines the fact that this arena is very different indeed to the single organisation setting. What works for a bounded organisation, in terms of planning, implementation and review, is absolutely not necessarily what works in a strategic multi-agency setting³.

Research also regularly concludes that people find this arena challenging as it is simply not what they are used to. As was pointed out to participants at an LSP event in Hampshire, people actually need to 'unlearn' some of what they know, particularly the things that work in their own organisation, in order to open their minds to learning new approaches and concepts that work in an LSP setting⁴

Several interviewees commented that even within their organisation, expertise on strategic planning was in short supply, so trying to apply that limited expertise to a much harder multi-agency setting is bound to be difficult. Along with the need to build skills in partnership working, the need to build skills in this area of work was almost universally raised by interviewees.

In short, there is a marked, even chronic lack of understanding, experience and expertise around how to 'do' multi-organisational strategic planning and implementation. The kinds of learning and skills that need to be developed under this very significant and substantial heading are listed below and the list is certainly not exhaustive.

LSP members themselves do not need to have in depth understanding of all of the skills and topics below, but they do need to move to a basic understanding that these topics and possibilities exist and that skills and expertise can be called in and should be built up from local resources.

- a. Understanding that **more than 'business as usual' approaches are needed** for this context and developing an understanding of other approaches that can be used. For example, understanding why committee style meetings are anathema to effective partnership development and being aware that there are other ways of running effective meetings.
- b. Developing a clearer **shared understanding of the purpose of the Community Strategy** and then making amendments in the light of this clearer purpose. (At present, most Community Strategies are trying to fulfill too many roles in one document – a public relations statement, a strategy in the conventional sense of guiding decision-making, a time-limited action plan, a consultation document).
- c. Increased understanding of the purposes behind and methodologies associated with **long-term strategic planning**. We were told that many LSP's struggle to even conceive of anything long term or that this is part of their role. The private sector makes much more use of specific methodologies such as scenario planning, to help make sense of what can be conceptually difficult.
- d. In relation to improving the Strategy document and related implementation process,, increasing understanding of the **importance of an outcomes focus** and the difference between strategic direction, strategic objectives, lower level objectives, action and targets. Most Community Strategies contain mixed objectives, actions and vision statements, presented under the same heading. In addition, our experience is that in meetings and in written material, LSP's really struggle to articulate what they mean when discussing what they want to achieve – better understanding of 'strategic levels' would help with this.
- e. **Compiling and analysing material from multi-organisational sources** ie how to go about pulling together material from existing strategies and plans, and then how to make sense of what has been compiled and feed that into the Community Planning process.

³ See for example, *Lessons from New Commitment to Regeneration*. Hilary Russell. The Policy Press. 2001

⁴ Speech to LSP practitioners event, January 28th 2004, Danny Chesterman, consultant.

- f. **How to go about 'mainstreaming'** ie planning, developing and supported multi-organisational delivery on a 'cross-cutting' subject, using existing resources only. This includes:
- o deepening understanding of how to encourage and support people to make change, using effective forms of consultation, participation and involvement, negotiation and influencing
 - o exploring how to go about joint commissioning and investment
 - o knowing what kinds of structures and processes will aid the delivery process;
 - o what 'project management' means in a multi-organisational, collaborative context.
- g. An appreciation of the need to **consider both cost-effectiveness and an evidence-based approach to interventions** and some idea of how to go about doing this. This includes being able to scope and check options, rather than leaping to assumptions about what works.
- h. Understanding the **need to prioritise the LSP's activities** and focus and ways to go about doing this eg the use of criteria in reaching decisions
- i. For senior organisational players, an increased understanding of how to go about and the implications of **aligning their own corporate priorities behind the Community Strategy's priorities**. This would include considering how to get all LSP partners to start on this process.
- j. Increased understanding of the **basics of effective engagement** with other strategic partners. In particular, the realities of trying to rationalise existing partnerships, but also any other activities where influential and well-established individuals or groups are being asked to make changes.

5.11 Performance management

All LSP's need to be made aware of either the ODPM's framework for LSP's, or for non-Neighbourhood Renewal LSP's, other appropriate frameworks. They need to:

- understand why such a framework, though often much resisted, is a real friend to the LSP
- deepen their understanding of what 'performance management' means in a multi-organisational setting.
- Learn how to integrate performance management into the day to day running of the LSP

Experience suggests that this will take real effort in terms of learning input. Support officers or any team leading on performance management for an LSP, in particular need to have a solid grounding in the subject if they are to support their LSP through the process.

5.12 Engaging stakeholders

LSP's have to take on the whole 'ladder of engagement' – information, education, consultation, participation and partnership. This means that they need to undertake and commission high quality engagement on multiple levels, for multiple purposes. Clearly, this requires considerable skills and knowledge, particularly as within the range of engagement approaches listed above, each area has its own body of expertise and knowledge.

A particularly demanding aspect to engagement that was spotlighted as a problem by interviewees was understanding how to **plan and manage complex, multi-layered stakeholder engagement processes**. So for example, in developing an action planning process for 'Priority X', those involved will need to plan for and deliver just about every aspect of the engagement ladder, from information-giving, through to getting people to change their behaviour, hearts and minds.

Another specific LSP need is to call on people who have the ability to plan a **strategic approach to engagement** – to set out a reasoned programme of who will be engaged, by whom, when and how.

This whole area of engaging stakeholders seems to be an area where LSP's seem particularly prone to forgetting that they have many specialists in their own organisations to call on. Their job is not to know about all of this, (nor could they) but to understand the limits of their own understanding and call in help accordingly.

5.13 Planning & running participative meetings

It is widely acknowledged that many LSP meetings are less effective than they could be, with people leaving feeling any of; bored, disempowered, confused or else leaving with a warm glow, but little achieved in the meeting. This comes from several main causes:

- Low levels of knowledge and skills around planning effective meetings; eg understanding how to link what has to be done in between meetings with what happens in the meetings. This is often related to the low levels of support the LSP has in terms of real, quality time being spent in between meetings on the LSP's own affairs.
- Low levels of knowledge and skills in running meetings in more participative, effective ways. This is also linked to the fact that many LSP's have adopted a meeting culture and format comes from local authority committees.
- Lack of exposure to other types of meeting and therefore no concept of how they could be different and better
- Resistance to different approaches which by and large are empowering, from those who fear losing power.

5.14 Support for Chairs

The workshop event held in January 2004 brought forward the assertion that "Chairs needs leadership skills and there is a case for focussing particular training and development on the Chair of the LSP".

Where Chairs are local authority councillors, there is a particular need for them to recognise the difference between chairing an LSP and chairing a Cabinet or a Panel or other meeting which has a tightly set format and meeting protocols that are well understood context by all concerned.

Equally, Chairs who are effective in another setting need to understand what a very different beast an LSP is.

If it is felt, (and this view was put to us several times) that the role of the Chair is key, then realistic and ongoing support for Chairs will need to put in place in terms of their personal, as well as collective, learning and development needs.

5.15 Induction for new members

Putting in place an effective induction process for new members is essential if LSP's are to maintain the goal of all being similarly 'up to speed'. This is an area much neglected by partnerships generally, with a default expectation that people just turn up to their first meeting and get on with it. But this is a highly inefficient way of turning the new members into an effective part of the LSP 'team', as new people can take a year or longer to even begin to understand what they are part of. During that time, they are unlikely to be productive in partnership terms.

6 Approaches to learning

This report takes a very broad interpretation of what 'capacity building', 'training' and 'developmental needs' of LSP's comprise. This is also reflected in the range of learning approaches that have been drawn on in coming up with the recommendations in section 8.

As not all of these approaches are familiar, this section provides a brief guide to the different approaches to learning that can be drawn on in building the capacity of Hampshire's LSP's and which form part of the report's recommendations.

6.1 Action learning

Action learning is a teaching method that aims to link learning to the dynamics of the workplace.

Whereas traditional 'classroom' training uses case studies, simulations and prepared materials, action learning deals with real, live problems and begins with the agenda of the people engaging in the action learning process. This of course means that those people need to be faced with the same issue or task. Because the action learning process is particular to a person or organisation's needs, it almost always gives short-term benefits, although it also stimulates learning over the long term. It aims to get the person(s) to learn how to observe a problem, reflect on it and consider what action might be taken. At its best, action learning is the engine of a learning organisation — it is part of developing democracy at work. As we move into the knowledge economy and information age, the focus is on learning rather than training. It's about what you do, day to day, with organisational issues. You might take six people, ranging from very senior and very junior, to tackle a problem. Action learning breaks down the hierarchies to release learning between the different levels and from top to bottom.⁵

Action learning sets are one way of undertaking action learning. A small group of people commit to come together, supported by a learning facilitator, and share their progress on an agreed area of activity or task. As a rule of thumb, the more challenging the task and the lower the initial skills and knowledge of the participants, the more benefit will be drawn from using an external facilitator or trainer, particularly in the early stages of the learning set. So, where a group of people wish to tackle something that feels tricky but not overwhelmingly difficult, much progress can be made by those people simply agreeing to work together with whatever structures and process suits them.

6.2 Benefits of action learning

We suggest that an action learning approach has enormous potential and suits the reality of the LSP context:

- Some learning and development needs will be LSP-specific, not generic. Action learning allows the learning to be highly tailored to context and to the individuals involved.
- Lack of time is consistently found to be a significant barrier to learning. The focus on a real task and the prospect of an immediate result helps overcome the problem of persuading people to invest time in learning. More people are likely to be attracted to engaging in an action learning process than will give up time to attend all day or even half day 'training events', which as noted earlier, can suffer from rather a bad image.
- The action learning principle of mixing up people from different organisations, but also from different levels within an organisation is particularly appropriate one for LSP work, where there is a real need to escape from the constraints of linear thinking and hierarchy and to bring creativity and innovation to the fore.

Interviewees were strongly supportive of using action learning as a main plank of the pilot and confirmed the difficulties obtaining attendance at conventional training events, particularly all day events.

⁵ Adapted from article for Financial Times by Gillian Cribbs. 23^d May 2000.

6.3 Learning labs

'Learning labs' have been increasingly used by the public sector in this country. They are generally a step up from action learning, in terms of both the 'weight' of the problem or issue being tackled and in the sophistication and breadth of learning techniques that are brought to bear. The key characteristics are :

- the bringing together of people who share a problem or an interest. This must comprise a sample of all the key 'stakeholders' for that issue. So for example, a learning lab initiative about any aspect of service delivery would need to include some service users. It would always include both strategic and operational people.
- encouraging innovation
- implementing and evaluating new ways of working, potentially involving increased operational flexibility
- supporting necessary cultural change throughout the participating organisations.
- enabling front-line staff to bring forward ideas and see them through to fruition.
- driven by the people who best understand the services they are delivering and the needs of users, and who can propose solutions to overcome barriers to delivering a better service
- given support and priority within the organisation or partnership
- capable of offering lessons for broader dissemination and wider learning

In all the labs, activities were designed to stimulate creative thinking and different approaches to problem-solving. Exercises encouraged participants to use 'left and right brain' thinking, ie, exploring emotional and intuitive responses as well as logical and rational ones, to formulate a range of answers to questions rather than single conclusions. They were also asked to consider why they responded to certain situations in particular ways, and to examine any stereotypical ideas they had about services, agencies or colleagues.

Approaches used included De Bono's "Six Thinking Hats", visualising current and desired situations and expressing them as drawings, or using sculpting (a 'musical statues' exercise to express relationships and processes), recording thoughts and feelings experienced in unsatisfactory conversations alongside what was actually said); story telling; word association; and sharing perceptions of each other's role and function. The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook (by Peter Senge and others) has been a good source of activities⁶.

6.4 Training on generic topics

This is training where the subject matter is of relevance to a *broad, named target audience across the county* eg relevant to all LSP members or Greater LSP members. Good examples of this are training on partnership or on running better meetings. Whilst the material can be given a definite Community Planning or Neighbourhood Renewal 'twist', it is generically useful to many people both in and outside their LSP context.

Whilst such training can of course be commissioned 'in house' by one LSP, it is rare to find, from within one LSP, enough people to whom it is relevant, who agree that they have this particular training need and who are willing or able to give up the time.

In our experience, such training is therefore more likely to be jointly commissioned. The resulting mix of participants, from across LSP's and across organisations, brings added value in that people are exposed to other LSP's and ways of thinking. Joint training is a well established way of building or strengthening networks and relationships.

⁶ Adapted from Suffolk County Council report on use of learning labs, in the SmarterPartnerships Resource Toolkit. www.lgpartnerships.com

However, experience elsewhere suggests that such training must only be commissioned with care. We have observed, on several occasions the commissioning of such training for LSP's (eg within a county), with insufficient attention being paid to the purpose or format of the training and poor communications between those commissioning the training and the target audience. Not surprisingly, this has led to poor attendance and a dip in morale amongst those trying to raise the levels of understanding amongst their LSP members.

Any commissioned training should therefore be accompanied by a realistic level of 'testing the waters' and expressions of interest. Basic rules of good communication also need to be observed. The members of a Community Empowerment Network in one LSP (outside Hampshire) complained bitterly that they were asked to go on training events, without any real understanding of what they were being sent to or what it was supposed to achieve. To add insult to injury, the training format was quite inappropriate for their needs.

6.5 Tailored training by LSP or target audience

There are two approaches here.

Training for one LSP

Here, the training 'product' is tailored to meet the specific and agreed learning needs of one LSP. The LSP would agree that it needed to build its learning on some agreed issues and/or tackle a developmental issue. The advantage of this approach is not only that the material is absolutely right for that LSP, but that the shared training experience itself enhances partnership development and relationship building between LSP members. The downside is not being exposed to outside ideas and influences.

It pays to reflect on *who* needs to be trained even within any given LSP. For example, if the LSP is large, then intensive training might be better invested in a handpicked 'action team', which could comprise some LSP members and some key support and influencing officers. This team could then cascade what they have learnt through to the wider LSP.

LSP-tailored training can have two aims:

- 'Conventional' training, where the trainer is imparting new information and concepts and helping participants get to grips with them.
- A more action learning focus, where the trainer uses real materials and situations from that LSP, so people can apply what they are learning to their own context. So for example, a training event on the elements of effective partnership might include a session where having heard about good practice in terms of structures, people can reflect on their LSP's issues on partnership structures.

A good training event can and we suggest, should, supply both of these elements.

Tailored training for identified group or cross-LSP members

A second approach to tailored training is to identify a cross-county or cross-LSP set of people who have LSP-related learning needs – for example, all local authority councillors who sit on LSP's. (This has been identified as a target audience in another county as these people are perceived to need more support than they are currently receiving and to share a very particular context and culture which means bringing them together will have great added value).

Another example might be bringing voluntary sector people together to consider their particular learning needs in relation to working with or sitting on, LSP's.

6.6 Self-managed learning & development

This is here taken to mean learning and development work that the LSP, together with its support officers, *gets on and does for itself* ie no external support, trainers or consultants. There are various, complementary ways in which LSP's can go about addressing their own learning and developmental needs.

The table on the following page covers some ways of building learning and partnership development into the 'every day' activities of the partnership.

Building learning & development into 'everyday' LSP activities

LSP action	Comments
<i>Aim: Raise LSP members knowledge of each other and of each other's organisations</i>	
Provide accessible information about each member and their organisation eg photos, pen portraits, accompanied by basic facts and contact details. To be regularly updated.	<i>This could be a web-based resource and/or a 'members handbook. An absolutely basic and invaluable resource to have in place.</i>
Take building personal relationships seriously. Build in regular opportunities for informal interaction between LSP members or between them and working members / other partnerships. This could be anything from meals at the end or beginning of meetings, visits to each other's organisations, to awaydays with a residential element.	<i>Residential events are a powerful way of helping people to connect, but tend to be resisted on grounds of cost and time spent Relationship building takes time and effort and doesn't happen at all if people only ever connect through very formal meetings.</i>
<i>Aim: Raise LSP members' knowledge of the public, private, voluntary & community sectors</i>	
Written briefings, visits, presentations by organisations from different sectors which aim to explain the whole sector. Shadowing and mentoring arrangements, where people from different sectors are paired up, are all useful ways of deepening members understanding of the different sectors.	<i>All of these activities, apart from the written briefings, will also have the added value of building personal contacts and relationships.</i>
<i>Aim: Better meetings</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better agendas ie clear and realistic in scale ● Encourage reflection after each meeting ● Better minutes of meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase participation at meetings by all LSP members ● Improve quality of debate and dialogue at meetings
Running meetings in more participative ways , thus encouraging more in-depth discussions and contributions from all, rather than the regular few.	<i>This takes specific skills and experience to pull off, plus a commitment by the LSP to experiment with meeting formats.</i>
Consider whether the LSP is an optimum size.	<i>Where an LSP is very large, the opportunity for all members to have a realistic knowledge of and dialogue with each other, is much reduced.</i>
Review how agendas are prepared and written . Review minutes -are they appropriate and useful and if not, how can they be improved?	<i>Many LSP agendas & minutes militate against clear communication and understanding, making meetings less productive for learning</i>
Build in brief reflection slots. Encourage partners to take a moment to reflect on what they have learnt, for example, 'what worked well about the meeting today, what didn't work so well?'	<i>Starting small like this helps build an appreciation of what simple learning steps can achieve and make it become more of a cultural norm for the LSP.</i>

Pro-active Learning & development activities

There are many excellent 'toolkits' and frameworks which are aimed specifically at supporting partnerships in tackling self-managed developmental work. This includes the ODPM's LSP performance management framework, which contains a complete section on evaluation of the LSP itself. With the help of these products, it is theoretically possible for any LSP to undertake a significant amount of developmental and learning work on its own.

There are many benefits to an LSP self-consciously taking on the task of developing itself:

- the process can be tailored to fit what suits the context, energies and capabilities of the LSP
- Often what is 'home grown' is more robust than learning that is parachuted in from outside the LSP.
- It is the most likely way of ensuring that every single member of the LSP is exposed to some aspect of learning and development, (simply because work can be done at regular meetings as well as at special events like awaydays).
- it is cost effective

6.7 Miscellaneous learning opportunities

There are numerous opportunities to build learning into what is already going on, or to create 'bite-sized' learning chunks for LSP members. This could range from giving a 'short sharp' presentation on a topic at an LSP meeting, to setting up a 'learning lunch'. Well written briefing notes are a useful tool in this category.

6.8 Networks

Loose networks of people who share an interest or a job are a popular and relatively cheap way of encouraging the exchange of experience and ideas. However, it is important to note that the level of learning will be fairly low if the Network is really nothing more than a regular get together. To achieve higher levels of learning, the Network would need to be invested in or invest in itself, so that meetings can be better structured, information and ideas efficiently extracted and shared and appropriate external speakers or trainers brought in and so on.

6.9 Shadowing and secondments

This involves setting up opportunities to spend time with partners, to learn more about their work, perspectives etc. This can range from a week's shadowing arrangement between two people, through to formal seconding arrangements.

It can include agreeing specific assignments or tasks. It is helpful to set agreed objectives for learning and any other desired outcomes.

6.10 Coaching, mentoring & buddying

Coaching and mentoring are increasing in popularity. The essence of this approach is a one to one, or one coach for a very small group, relationship, where the learners are supported in their action learning by someone who may or may not have specific expertise relating to the job or task.

Coaching and mentoring can be carried out by either a professional or by a peer. These two approaches are obviously different, but each have their merits. In terms of costs, professional mentoring or coaching are not realistic options at present for many LSP members.

'Buddying' is the simplest level of this approach, where someone is paired up with an 'old hand' who commits to staying in touch, being at the end of the phone, having debriefs to explain what happened in a meeting that the new person didn't understand and so on.

7 Outcomes of a Hampshire LSP's Capacity building programme

This report has been written to guide how funding for LSP capacity building in Hampshire is used. This section considers the kind of broad outcomes that should be aimed for as a result of the capacity building programme's activities.

1. Enhanced appreciation of the **importance of LSP's adopting a 'continual learning' approach** and of the need for an active developmental programme for each LSP.
2. Increased **readiness to invest time, resources and effort** in the learning and developmental processes.
3. A coordinated, **collaborative approach to learning and development across the Hampshire LSP's** which makes the most of the additional funding, taps into existing resources and exploits the potential for sharing learning and developmental practice.
4. All LSP members and lead support officers, have a **reasonable knowledge of each other and of each other's organisation's**. There are systems in place to ensure that this knowledge is maintained eg an induction process for new members, regular updating of any member's handbooks or similar
5. All LSP members and lead support officers have an **increased understanding** of basic facts, the context and culture of the **public, private, voluntary and community sectors**
6. All LSP members and lead support officers have an increased understanding of the **basics of the Community Planning agenda**, and of **Neighbourhood Renewal** where appropriate.
7. All LSP members have had an opportunity to build their understanding of the basics of what makes for **effective partnership working**.
8. A smaller number of LSP members, support officers and key organisational officers will have a deeper knowledge of **how to support and further develop LSP's**. This group would ideally include all Chairs and Vice-Chairs.
9. **All Chairs and Vice-Chairs have been offered learning opportunities** to enable them to be clearer about their role and strengthen their performance.
10. A significant body of LSP members, support officers and key organisational officers have an enhanced understanding of how to support a **strategic, collaborative planning and implementation process** which is primarily aimed at delivering results through the **mainstream and influencing**, not through additional funding and 'command and control' approaches.
11. A significant body of LSP members, support officers and key organisational officers have an enhanced understanding and skills on using a **performance management framework** as a means of further developing an LSP, both as a partnership and in its delivery.
12. Significant number of LSP members, support officers and key organisational officers will have had the opportunity to take up **learning opportunities on any specialist topics** which are deemed necessary by their organisation and/or their LSP. This is likely to include such topics as planning and running effective, participative meetings, consensus building and conflict management, project management, consultation and involvement approaches (for working with other organisations as well as with the public), communications and so on.

8 Recommendations on elements of a capacity building programme

The recommendations in this section are based on the proposed capacity building outcomes set out in section 7 and draw on the different approaches to learning and development set out in detail in section 6.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Overarching

1. Ensure that effective levels of coordination and collaboration occur, across LSP's and between the programme's funded activities and existing capacity building activities, through proper recognition, support and funding for the coordination and collaboration function.
2. Take steps to ensure that there is widespread senior buy-in to the capacity building programme, including leading by example.
3. Make use of the significant existing learning activities and the existence of people with relevant learning and change management skills, across the partner organisations
4. Actively encourage LSP's to 'match fund', either across the board, or for elements of the pilot programme.

Specific

5. Appoint a post-holder or holders to carry out the substantial additional work relating to coordination, collaboration and to setting up new activities and in order to bring additional expertise and experience on learning and partnership development into the programme overall
6. Seek ways to strengthen the emerging LSP practitioners' network, to support its important learning and development function. Ensure the programme is tightly tied into the work of the Network, not running in parallel.
7. Promote and support action learning as a key plank for building capacity. Each LSP could be allocated a sum of money to be spent on action learning.
8. Hold a dialogue process to establish whether there is an appetite and sufficient resource to set up one or more Learning Lab initiatives
9. Ringfence funds or seek some other incentive to support each LSP undertaking its own self-managed developmental work during the life of the programme.
10. Develop a Hampshire-wide programme of 'basic briefings', delivered by team developed for the purpose.
11. Commission and run some training on generically useful topics relating to Community Planning.
12. Ensure that LSP Chairs and Vice-Chairs receive specific and personally tailored developmental input.
13. Seek to set up coaching, mentoring or buddying opportunities within and across LSP's.
14. Seek to set up secondment and shadowing arrangements within and across LSP's.
15. Establish systematic induction processes for new members in all LSP's
16. Be sure to exploit miscellaneous learning and development opportunities as they arise

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Coordination and collaboration on capacity building

To make best use of the pilot funding, we suggest that there are two specific ways in which the programme will need to be strongly coordinated :

- Coordination and collaboration across all of the LSP's which are benefiting from the funding. There is clearly enormous potential benefit to be reaped from the shared learning that will accumulate across the LSP's, as well as obvious economies of scale.
- Coordination and collaboration between new activities supported by the programme and the existing and planned activities already taking place to build capacity. A current complaint in Hampshire is the current lack of coordination of what is on offer, with LSP's receiving offers from all sides to attend conferences, workshops and meetings, many of which have a capacity building focus in practice, if not in name. This suggests that a strong effort will need to be made to knit all current and emerging activities together, or the confusion will increase.

Several initiatives are particularly important to include in this push for coordination:

- GOSE's regional capacity building programme for LSP's
- The Health Development Agency's initiative to support and improve partnership working. There is a currently an officer allocated to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, whose job includes supporting improved partnership working.
- Association of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Local Authorities, which has been actively involved in promoting learning through conferences and through supporting the development of an LSP practitioners network.
- Professional groupings which undertake capacity building activities and who have a strong interest in engaging with LSP's themselves. The example which has already borne fruit is the Hampshire Public Health Network, but there will certainly be others.
- The NHS Workforce Development Confederation, Hampshire branch.

If it is accepted that there is real potential in taking a collaborative and coordinated approach to capacity building for all of the LSP's in Hampshire, then the programme will need to allocate some realistic resource to ensuring that such collaboration is supported. Systematically sharing information, setting up joint training initiatives, checking who is doing what, what resources are already around – these activities all take real time, not to mention some skills and knowledge of learning and capacity building as a topic.

8.2 Need for high profile and senior mandate

Given the well-established national picture of natural inertia and even resistance when it comes to capacity building for LSP's, we suggest that the programme will need :

- a high profile – such that every LSP and key organisational players will be well aware of its existence and importance. The programme must be packaged and presented openly and 'loudly'.
- senior commitment and visible leadership. LSP Chairs and senior players must first understand why capacity building is important and then set a good example by being prepared to embrace it themselves, thus sending out a strong message about the importance of learning and development. This means, at a very pragmatic level, being prepared to give their own time up and to give the mandate for others to invest in their own learning. Without this lead, there is a danger that the programme will be used only by the 'keenest' instead of by all who really need to be engaged by it.

An event for all LSP senior players and Chief Executives of partner organisations could be held right at the start of the programme or even before, to get feedback, understanding and 'buy in' from that audience to the aims and activities proposed.

8.3 Matched funding potential

This programme, with its need to be coordinated and collaborative provides an excellent opportunity for all LSP partners to consider ways of adding to the funding pot provided by the pilot. In particular, it presents local authorities, who are still largely shouldering the partnership costs of their LSP, including learning and development costs, an opportunity to encourage other partners to consider how they might contribute too.

Whilst this has proved far from easy to date, it is possible that the high profile nature of this programme and the lure of additional funding, will open doors hitherto closed. It is also significant that interviewees commented on how absolutely every element of learning touched on in this report would be one hundred per cent transferable to other settings in people's own organisations and sectors. Highlighting this general benefit to staff / stakeholders in all participating organisations, will be an important way of potentially leveraging in further funding.

8.4 Tapping into mainstream learning resources

There is another important benefit to supporting real coordination and collaboration – making use of existing resources. There are two aspects to this – tapping into current learning activities and tapping into the professionals in partner organisations who deal with learning and change management.

Existing learning activities

Within Hampshire, as in all other areas, there is already a large swathe of learning activities which are of direct relevance to the capacity building needs of LSP's, yet they are not being picked up on and used. There is potential to change this and thus ensure that in addition to any activities funded by the programme money, learning starts to use mainstream resources.

Resources and activities to be tapped include:

- Any relevant training programmes which are already open to 'all comers'. The principal example here is the extensive training provided by a range of voluntary organisations, both in the county and by national bodies such as NCVO. Topics of relevance to at least some LSP members are likely to be offered, ranging from 'how to get your point across in a meeting' to 'working in partnership'.

- Relevant training programmes or learning activities (briefing sessions, induction sessions etc) that are currently go on for a particular set of people (within an organisation or a professional body for example), but which are not open to LSP members. In other words, negotiation and brokering to encourage organisations to open their training doors, in a planned way, to LSP members. An example of this would be that local authority X may be running a briefing session on Community Planning and the LSP for some of its own staff. This session could also be made available to new LSP members, or those who need to be brought 'up to speed'.

We have picked up growing levels of activity around the country in relation to briefing people and/or discussing the implications of LSP's and Community Strategies. The irony of this is that we have not infrequently found that, the most informed LSP members are those who have received a thorough briefing through an outside source (eg their professional organisation, organisational newsletters), but not through their membership of the LSP. There is clearly potential to use this increasing level of interest and activity to ensure that LSP members themselves tap into as many relevant opportunities as possible.

The starting point for achieving better use of existing resources would be to build a **comprehensive information resource** of who is offering what kinds of learning activities already. To achieve a realistic level of collaboration and coordination, working on both new activities and improved use of existing resources, will take substantial time and effort, but the rewards would be considerable. It would be a 'best practice' approach, demonstrating the principles of Community Planning – reducing duplication, filling gaps, using existing resources better and promoting stronger collaboration between agencies and LSP's.

Using learning professionals

The partner organisations between them have a significant resource in the shape of staff whose 'day job' is about helping their organisations to learn and to adapt to change. These people have skills and expertise that is of direct relevance to any learning programme for LSP's. Yet to date, the involvement of learning and organisational development professionals in supporting LSP's has been notable by its absence.

We suggest that a key goal of the pilot should be to ensure that these people are actively and closely involved in the whole programme. This is particularly important to avoid the risk of people who are very knowledgeable about LSP's, but not about how to help people learn, having sole control of the programme.

We would therefore go further and recommend that if the pilot programme is overseen by some form of management group, this group should include a good representation of people who have specific and relevant expertise in how to bring learning to organisations and change management in organisations (a closely related topic).

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

8.5 Establish 'Learning Coordinator' role

All of the above points relating to the need for and potential benefits of coordination, collaboration and tapping into mainstream resources, imply that some people somewhere will be doing a lot of additional work. In addition, the programme will also create work in the shape of new training events to be organised, new materials to be written and so on.

We would argue that at least some of this activity would benefit from being carried out by people who have some experience and expertise in learning and in partnership development as a topic. For example, really effective training is a relatively rare commodity, partly because it is too often commissioned by people with insufficient understanding of the learning needs of the participants, of the qualities required in the trainer, the importance of venue and so on.

Coordination, collaboration and initiating new learning activities is then is a substantial body of work, requiring at least in part, some specific skills and knowledge. There seems little chance of this gap being filled by people currently active as LSP practitioners, in that they are extremely busy already and they may well not have the relevant background in learning.

We therefore recommend that in order to bridge this gap and to ensure that the programme overall is on a strong footing, a 'learning coordinator' post is created. This post could be spread across more than one person and could include use of secondment and job-sharing, to build learning of Hampshire-based key people.

The post holder(s) role would be to :

- Keep an overview of and support delivery of the whole programme
- Act as a source of direct help on practicalities eg consulting on training needs, setting up joint training.
- Work to set up systematic sharing of learning and information relating to learning and development across the LSP's. This would be likely to include e-bulletins, newsletters and a dedicated website or section of an existing website.
- Liaise with existing providers of learning to seek to make stronger links with LSP's capacity building needs.
- Develop a central, regularly updated resource - 'a learning library' - comprising:
 - o information about existing learning opportunities and forthcoming specially commissioned activities.
 - o useful documents and references
 - o a list of organisations, consultants and trainers offering relevant services
- Possibly provide a service of acting as the independent third party / facilitator at events with a learning or developmental focus, for example, at a key partnership development awayday. If this role was included, the post-holder would need to have the relevant skills to carry out this demanding and skilled role.

In order to avoid any sensitivities around 'political dominance' (and these do currently exist between some local authorities), the post holder would need:

- to have a neutral status ie not 'owned' by one LSP or local authority.
- be agreed on as a useful way forward by all concerned
- enjoy a strong and visible level of support from senior players
- to work very closely with the LSP practitioners Network, for example, possibly working to a sub-group of the Network or to a sub-group which also includes learning professionals.
- be jointly funded.

If the programme and the post holders role within that was found to be successful, then there would be a good chance of the Hampshire LSP's jointly funding that post, or a revised version of it, when the funding ends. There may well be potential, either in the life of the pilot or afterwards, to develop the post further to cover wider shared learning needs across organisations, ie to lose the LSP-specific focus.

8.6 Strengthening the LSP Practitioners Network

This Network, comprising those officers who work wholly or mainly on supporting their LSP, is in its infancy. At the January 2004 LSP event, there was very strong support for practitioners network to be developed:

Why do we need an LSP Practitioners Network?

- Share best practice/Avoid pitfalls
- Provide a confidential forum
- Provide professional and personal support
- Develop positive peer pressure to challenge the ways we work and think
- Provide an opportunity to tackle issues collectively
- Provide a forum which is able to speak with a single professional voice
- Advise and support individual LSP's HI OWLA and Chief Executives' group
- Share work and develop joint initiatives

Notes from HI OWLA LSP workshop, January 2004

From the above list, it is clear that an important element of the Network would be learning and partnership development. It is therefore vital that the learning coordinator post (see previous section 8.5) is completely tied into the work of the Network, not carried out as a parallel activity.

At present, the Network has no agreed funding to support its own coordination or activities. In addition, the sheer number of people involved (because of the large numbers of LSP's involved) means that the Hampshire LSP Practitioner Network will need to work hard to be a real network. Counties with smaller numbers of practitioners can build personal relationships more easily.

We believe that the Practitioners Network needs to become the 'engine' and hub of shared learning and development across the county. If provided with appropriate support and mandate, it could build this role over the duration of the programme, strongly linked to the activities of the learning coordinator, who would act as the paid arm of the Network, but only for learning issues. (Without this boundary, the post holder could become very torn between competing demands on their time and the capacity building aspects could easily be overlooked in favour of more immediate and obvious demands).

When the capacity building funding ends, the Network should have built its own capacity and skills to a point where it can then drive a coordinated approach to development and capacity building.

There are several ways in which the Network could act as the 'learning hub' for the whole programme.

Dedicated support for the Network.

If the Network is to be effective in promoting and supporting learning, as proposed in this report, this will require a level of administrative and other coordination which does not currently exist. Discussions should therefore be held on the most appropriate way to build the core stability of the Network across all of its desired activities, so that it can play a full role in relation to the capacity building programme.

Tailored training for the LSP practitioners themselves.

Those officers supporting LSP's have specific learning needs and can go deeper into some subjects than their colleagues will ever have time to. They need to be as knowledgeable and skilled as it is possible for them to be in order to do their job effectively and should therefore all receive training as part of the pilot.

Shared training is also practical and powerful way to help build ongoing working relationships between the practitioners. As a guide, we would suggest something that was the equivalent of two training days, delivered in a 'sandwich' format. Two days is a realistic minimum level of input, given the kinds of skills and knowledge levels that currently exist and the wish to take practitioners to a 'next level' of knowledge and skills. The detail of the learning outcomes would need to be explored further with the trainees themselves, but early training could usefully cover:

- Moving from Strategy to implementation: deepening practitioners' understanding of what 'implementation' actually means in a Community Planning context, considering what has and hasn't worked to date, planning next steps.
- Aspects of partnership development, particularly linked into a performance management or self-appraisal approach to the partnership's effectiveness as a partnership.
- How to plan for and then manage relatively complex processes which involve a mix of information, consultation and much deeper dialogue processes.

Involvement in other learning activities

We see the Practitioners Network and learning coordinator as having a key role to play in maintaining an overview of the emerging pattern of learning activities (ie training days, action learning, learning labs etc). This would include some early evaluation and adjustments to the programme in the light of the results.

8.7 Action learning

For more detail on what action learning comprises and the benefits it offers, see section 6.1. We recommend that action learning approaches, whether through groups of people coming together in a self-managed way for a particular area of learning, or through formally supported action learning sets, should be strongly promoted through this programme.

How this is done in practice would need to be considered in more detail, but the key point would be for all action learning activities to be 'logged' and the results fed back to the learning coordinator and the LSP Practitioners Network.

We suggest that any action learning activity receives at least some initial professional help, to ensure that people get off to a good start and adopt a sufficiently structured approach to yield results. Such help could be found from amongst partner organisation's own learning / training staff.

Some outline ideas on how an action learning approach could be fostered through the programme are:

1. Each LSP could have a modest sum of money to support action learning. They could choose to use this on things like paying for a trainer / facilitator to support an action learning set, supporting the direct costs of a self-managed group (venue, catering etc) or freeing up their own time to have say a three-week period to really focus on their action learning project.
2. Another sum could be set aside to support action learning for people who come from different LSP's, but who share a learning need or a context. For example, voluntary sector representatives on LSP's may find that they have a shared action learning need. The topics could be kept deliberately different so that a broader range of learning emerges

8.8 Learning labs

For more detail on what learning labs comprise and the benefits they offer, see section 6.2.

If there is a willingness to embrace a learning labs approach, this would be a worthwhile initiative to support in this programme. As this approach is more culturally challenging and unfamiliar than many of the others in this report, it should only be adopted with full mandate from those who will be involved and their senior managers. Adequate resourcing is also essential, or people will be set up to fail and that would have a very negative impact on promoting a culture of risk taking in learning.

A sum could be put aside to enable a fuller dialogue process across the LSP's of whether such an approach is appropriate and if so, on what issues, for which sets of stakeholders / LSP's.

8.9 Self-managed development work

For more detail on self-managed development work comprises and the benefits it offers, see section 6.5.

This should form an important plank of the capacity building programme as future success depends on LSP's building their own motivation and ability to tackle their own learning and development needs.

If any self-managed development work carried out during this programme is to be monitored and the learning shared, there will need to be support for this process. The Practitioners Network and the learning coordinator should be used for this. For example, it would be useful to compare notes on which toolkits are most helpful, on where the self-managed process reached its limits, what topics were most suited to self-managing learning and development and so on.

Experience has shown that self-managed development work will works best where :

- There is agreement to undertake such work by all or a significant proportion of the LSP
- There is a group of people who have an appropriate level of skills and competencies and they operate as a 'project team' on the development work.
- They have been given a transparent mandate to undertake some developmental work with the LSP
- The group comprises a mix of organisations and levels of seniority. It would include people from within the LSP and the support officers.

But it should be noted that this approach requires the following to be in place:

- Agreement by most or all of the LSP that such work is needed
- For those supporting the process to have sufficient mandate and/or authority to be able to take the role of challenging and pushing the LSP.
- A group of competent people (whether LSP members or not), capable of supporting this process. For example, people who have some familiarity with facilitation skills, working with evaluation frameworks in a partnership setting and so on.

In order to both help people attain the necessary range of skills and competencies to be able to pursue self-managed developmental work with their LSP, and to build the skills of those who are already more experienced, resources could be earmarked to support these internal LSP development processes. For example, each LSP could be given a 'pot' of money to use on such things as:

- buying in a limited amount of time to kickstart their self-managed process
- to directly build the skills of their project team, or
- to bring in an independent facilitator or consultant when they hit a tough spot or need additional expertise to get over a 'developmental hump'.

8.10 'Home-grown' briefings programme

There is currently very poor understanding of Community Planning / LSP's amongst any other than a tiny handful of people in each area, including within the LSP's own partner organisations. It is this lack of understanding which is currently a significant barrier to making progress on all aspects of Community Planning – what people don't understand, they cannot work with effectively or feel enthused about. Lack of understanding breeds misunderstanding and serious misconceptions, as well as apathy and lack of commitment.

It is our contention that this 'basic understanding gap' is so large and a significant, (despite attempts to bridge it) that a goal of the programme should be to make a significant impact on it – to raise understanding of the 'abc' of Community Planning, certainly amongst LSP members themselves, but also amongst other key players.

It is important to work on the basis that fully communicating the 'whole picture' of what Community Planning is all about does require much more than handing out some written notes, an off the cuff presentation or 'death by powerpoint'. The concepts and proposed ways of working are so new to some people and so ambitious in scale, that people need careful help to genuinely absorb the key points. This is even more so when you are actually engaging with people who mistakenly believe that they do already understand Community Planning, whereas in practice, they only understand a fraction of the picture.

So, participative briefing sessions where people 'learn by doing', use of engaging, effective speakers and high quality written materials are all required. We therefore suggest that to bridge the factual knowledge gap noted above, a series of high quality, accessible, 'bite-sized chunks' briefings events, (effectively, training, although not billed as such) are organised.

The briefing sessions would be delivered to a wide range of audiences across the sectors and organisations involved in the LSP, tailored appropriately for each audience. The aim would be to build more in-depth understanding of the Community Planning agenda generally, and of their relevant LSP's, across a significant body of key players within the county.

The briefings would cover the 'back to basics' material that tends to be so markedly missing at present, as set out in section 5.7. They would also cover new and emerging concepts and information.

To make these activities add real value, they should be not be delivered by outsiders, but by the people closely involved in each area, whether LSP members, Greater LSP members, communications professionals from partner organisations or LSP supporters.

However, to do this will require the development of a programme. This would entail the following steps:

1. **Identify the most important target audiences** for these briefings. In order to avoid hundreds of people being herded into briefing sessions that they rightly feel are irrelevant to them, it will be important to identify audiences at a very specific level ie for a large organisations, which departments, which teams within a department, which individuals in an organisation? Priority should be given to the LSP's own partner organisations.
2. **Identify a group of people who have the skills and willingness to carry out this work**, probably on an agreed time-limited basis eg for a six month period. This would ideally be a multi-organisational team, thus providing another opportunity to share skills and increase cross-sectoral understanding. There is real potential to bring in people who already have communication skills from partner organisations to support on or at least give advice on the whole process. The Hampshire Network of public relations officers, (currently covering local authority public relations officers) is just one example of this.
3. **Bring 'the team' together to build their understanding and knowledge** of the content that they need to deliver to an appropriate level. Also support them in improving their communication skills so that they are fit to carry out their new work ie effectively 'train the trainers'.
4. **Support the team in developing shared materials** (eg Powerpoint presentations, written briefing notes). These could easily be tailored to include relevant local information.
5. Working closely with senior influencers from inside and outside the LSP, **develop a programme of briefings events**. These would comprise both specially organised events, and a service offered to groups and organisations who are already meeting for some other purpose.

8.11 Training provision on generically useful topics

A substantial programme of training on a number of topics that are relevant to the learning needs to LSP's would undoubtedly help to raise the 'base level' of skills and learning and bridge the current gap.

A range of the content topics that LSP's or at least some people in and around LSP's would benefit from training on are listed below. There is more detail on what needs to be covered for each topic set out in section 5.

To ensure that the any training provided is relevant to and appropriate for those attending, some level of further training needs analysis may be needed, but we here recommend the topics that seem of most immediate and indisputable relevance.

- Effective partnership & collaborative working
- Strategic, collaborative planning & implementation (this is such a substantial topic that it would benefit, in training terms, from being broken down in smaller subsets).
- Performance management for LSP's
- Aspects of stakeholder engagement, especially planning complex, multi-layered engagement processes
- Planning and running participative meetings

8.12 Chairs & Vice-Chairs

There needs to be capacity building activities for LSP chairs. Such activities must have a high degree of tailoring as the personal experience and expertise of the Chairs varies so much.

Chairs will naturally benefit from the increased learning across their own LSP and any support should focus tightly on the specific demands of their role.

The LSP Practitioners Network and the learning coordination role will be the basis for planning the detail of such activities.

8.13 Coaching, mentoring and buddying

To address both personal development needs and to increase understanding of each other's organisations and sectors, coaching, mentoring and buddying (pairing up an old hand and newer recruit) are all well-tried approaches.

We have made the assumption that professional personal coaching or mentoring are likely to be prohibitively expensive approaches for the purposes of the pilot. However, there are strong possibilities for informal mentoring and coaching arrangements for LSP members. These could easily be developed through the LSP Practitioners' Network and Learning Coordination role.

8.14 Shadowing and secondments

Again, these approaches have been shown to be successful in other partnership settings and as with buddying and as with coaching, mentoring and buddying, opportunities could be developed through the LSP Practitioners' Network and Learning Coordination role. However, the additional required element would be senior buy-in.

8.15 Establishing systematic induction process

Few LSP's have any kind of induction process for new members, whether of the LSP itself or of working group members. This failure to bring new people up to speed is another drain on the overall efficiency and effectiveness of an LSP, particularly as turnover of members is still relatively high and given the very substantial amount of information and insights that new members must take on board before becoming productive members of their LSP.

One strand within the programme, taken forward by the LSP Practitioners Network and the learning coordination role, should therefore be to address this deficiency. Considering what the needs of new members are and how best to meet them systematically would constitute a good topic for a self-managing action learning set comprising people from different LSP's.

8.16 Miscellaneous learning & development opportunities

Over the period of the programme, numerous excellent opportunities will arise to promote capacity building and learning amongst LSP's and amongst those people who most need to increase their understanding of LSP's and Community Planning as a process. This will include:

- Using other people's events and structures to extract some learning. A good example of this was the December 2003 Conference held by the Public Health Network of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The Hampshire Strategic Partnership supported the event in exchange for the main theme being the role of LSP's in delivering healthy communities.
- LSP's taking the opportunity to attend each other's meetings as observers or to make presentations on something they have learnt which is of interest to their hosts.
- Putting on an event because there is something important to bring people together on around learning.
- Supporting people to ensure that those attending useful national events or training do take the time to feedback what they have learnt. For example, this might mean the learning coordinator being informed of who is going where, then as a minimum, undertaking a brief phone interview with the person after the event.

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