

## **REPORT ON WORKSHOPS WITH THEMATIC BOARDS**

### **1. The Brief**

LB Haringey Partnerships commissioned the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to prepare and facilitate a workshop with each of the six thematic boards, to help them focus on the delivery of the new Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Haringey. The workshops all took place in March 2008.

The workshops had to take into account the new LAA guidance and to cover the following key elements:

- understand the importance of the LAA
- understand the role of the thematic board in delivering the LAA outcomes
- understand the performance management framework
- develop an action planning approach with key milestones
- identify the way forward for each thematic board
- re-energise the board

The same format was used with each of the thematic workshops, although time varied. The main approach was a learning process using example and practice, with short preliminary presentations. There was insufficient time for the theme boards to complete planning their milestones for action for all their LAA priorities.

### **2. Overall Findings**

There was a good attendance at most workshops, particularly from the well established themes which had a clearer sense of purpose and tended to be more strategic in their approach. There was general awareness of the new challenges posed by LAAs, but the changes required to address them were still being considered.

There were marked differences in the use of performance management and in strategic planning capacity. Knowledge and understanding of a strategic commissioning approach was similarly variable. There was broad agreement that data sharing and the evidence base needed to improve.

Generally there was recognition that different ways of working were required. Thematic structures might need review and required people who could play an effective role in strategic planning and ensuring delivery.

### **3. National Context**

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are having to develop a sharper local focus with fewer priorities in order to make a greater impact. Negotiating these priorities with the Government requires skilled analysis of robust evidence. Strategic commissioning is taking over from a short-term project approach, and performance management is essential to ensure delivery of outcomes.

LAAs are now part of mainstream working, and its priorities and targets need to be embedded in organisational service plans. From 2009, Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will provide a holistic independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there. It will look across statutory agencies and assess local partnership working. LAA performance will be central to that assessment.

Thematic Boards play a key role in making decisions about priorities and resources, in driving delivery against agreed targets, and in fostering wider involvement. Achieving the LAA targets will be dependent on their effectiveness.

### **4. Ways of Working**

Rather than relying on standard quarterly meetings, new ways of working are required to engage partners and citizens, and to ensure delivery. For instance use an annual business planning cycle, structured so a wider range of people can be involved. This planning cycle will need to fit with partners' own business planning arrangements, so that there is joint ownership. Haringey Strategic Partnership (HSP) will need to ensure that the thematic business planning arrangements allow for themes to work together on cross-cutting issues.

Once overall priorities are determined, then thematic boards need to adopt a strategic planning approach, identifying key milestones and allocating the individual responsibilities that are so vital to delivery. This needs to be done as part of the process of fixing targets. The intended move to joint commissioning (away from project bidding) has to operate for 2009/10.

The format for meetings could alter so there is dedicated time to discuss one or more major priorities or issues each time in addition to routine business. Simple measures like different seating arrangements and meeting places can also change the ways people work together.

A number of activities and functions carried out by individual partners and themes might be better coordinated or integrated. For instance a joined up approach to publicity and communications can deliver tangible benefits, along with shared data observatories and common performance management systems. Joint strategic commissioning and procurement might produce efficiency savings.

## **5. Performance Management**

There needs to be a common approach to performance management, not only between themes but also between statutory partners, otherwise there will be inefficiencies, inconsistencies, and information gaps. This may mean resourcing coordination and initial development of shared systems. It also needs to be championed at a senior level.

Some thematic boards are not familiar with performance management, and this was associated with insufficient thinking about how it would actually work in practice, for instance:

- allocate responsibility for each target to appropriate individual thematic board members
- at thematic board level, performance manage commissions rather than individual projects
- synchronise the timing of meetings with availability of performance management information
- start performance management with a limited number of performance indicators to develop real understanding of how to be effective
- how to work with the local authority's scrutiny role.

There is a need to be aware of what lies behind reported figures, and to dig below the high level performance indicators. Quarterly monitoring will not be enough if performance is red or amber, so the theme boards will need to determine how to carry this out without overloading theme board meetings. There is a danger that unless performance management is done effectively it will become little more than an administrative chore.

## **6. Evidence Base and Data Sharing**

Themes will not be able to identify issues and set justifiable priorities without an accurate evidence base. Baselines need to be set, data sources confirmed and collection responsibilities agreed. By using a sophisticated social analysis themes will then be able to target the right groups of people, and share information with each other (for some issues, themes may wish to jointly target resources and interventions on specific discrete groups of people to maximise impact). Often Public Health have expert skills in this general area of work.

Data sharing was an issue raised by a number of thematic workshops, with concern raised about the way the Data Protection Act got in the way of sharing information about 'clients' to allow services to work together more successfully. This obstacle has been overcome elsewhere.

## **7. Structures and People**

The role of the thematic board is wider than just delivering LAA targets, but that is a pre-condition for credibility and willing participation. As well as clarity about lead agency responsibilities, it needs the right people round the table who are able to play an active role to help inform and drive delivery. Individual members must add value to the overall success of the thematic board. There appears to be a general lack of private sector involvement in the theme boards, a common difficulty which needs to be addressed.

The size of meetings is important, and if a meeting has more than twelve to fifteen people involved then alternative ways of working should be considered (such as with the thematic workshops themselves). Given the size of theme boards and the quarterly meetings cycle, there may be value in considering a managerial sub-group which is tasked with the oversight of performance and implementation on behalf of the theme board. There is anyhow a need for themes to be able to be able to take decisions and tackle performance issues in between the quarterly cycle of Board meetings.

Board and sub-group structures need to be appropriate. There is often value in having a limited number of sub-groups focussed on particular major priorities, and in some instances they can be an excellent mechanism for cross-thematic working. However there should not be too many sub-groups, and only be one tier of sub-groups below any thematic board. Alongside them, 'task and finish' groups can be a useful approach.

Locality arrangements like Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Neighbourhood Management can play a useful role in addressing local operational problems and engaging local communities. There is a need to be clear about how locality arrangements can connect into the Thematic Board arrangements, most likely through the sub-groups, and support delivery at a local level.

Other places how found it useful to provide joint support and coordination for technical professionals like performance managers, data specialists and communications staff.

## **8. Key Issues from Individual Theme Workshops**

Appendix A sets out a number of key issues for each individual Theme Board.

## **9. Suggested Next Steps**

A number of follow up actions have been identified for the Haringey Strategic Partnership to improve its capacity to deliver against the LAA targets. In particular these include:

### **9.1 Business and Service Planning**

With partners, to identify a senior manager from each Theme Board to take responsibility for leading business planning and to agree a common annual planning framework and timeline, define the necessary information support required and commit to integrating relevant LAA targets into organisational service plans. This group might also be well placed for developing the partnership's approach to Comprehensive Area Assessment.

### **9.2 Implementing Performance Management**

To develop expertise, roles and processes with appropriate staff reporting to each theme, including those with responsibility for finance reporting, so there are robust arrangements and accountabilities for presenting performance management information and reports in a reliable and consistent way.

### **9.3 Evidence Base and Data Sharing**

To set up a reliable coordinated approach to data collection and analysis, and consider developing a shared data observatory.

### **9.4 Joint Strategic Commissioning**

To develop a joint strategic commissioning framework for the key statutory bodies, with the involvement of representatives from the business and third sectors. It will also be appropriate to consider promoting collective approaches for potential bidders so that smaller business and organisations can play a part and be supported.

### **9.5 Structural Arrangements**

The Haringey Strategic Partnership to provide direction on suitable structural arrangements for themes so that cross-thematic opportunities are exploited, in particular through sub-group arrangements. To also review the remit and activities of the Better Places Partnership and the Integrated Housing Board to best reflect the Local Area Agreement Outcomes.

## **9.6 Community Engagement and Communications**

All the key services have to engage with communities. A coordinated approach might be more effective and provide better opportunities both for influencing strategic business planning and for tackling local operational problems. Mapping communications activities across the Themes might identify gaps and suitable joint approaches.

## **Appendix A**

### **KEY ISSUES FROM INDIVIDUAL THEME WORKSHOPS**

#### **Well Being**

- Large group
- Has thematic working groups looking at various outcomes, but may be too many tiers
- Joint commissioning approach needed (a new joint commissioning group has been established)

#### **Children & Young Persons (C&YPB)**

- Early identification of vulnerable children
- Consider best structure for meetings
- Have a challenge review in each meeting

#### **Safer Communities (SCEB)**

- Streamline meetings and better diary planning (especially important for regional partners)
- Need for effective coordination of actions by different partners and the use of joint project teams
- Strong integrated approach to communications
- Role of area-based working to deal with local problems

#### **Integrated Housing (IHB)**

- To be clear about purpose and getting the right people round the table
- Building up a multi-agency commission
- More outcome-focussed and problem solving
- Chance for a fresh start and to inject more interest

#### **Better Places**

- This theme board is the least developed. Place-making and the Local Development Framework (LDF) are critical concerns, but the board is not yet configured or prepared to deliver these.
- Consider making general environment a sub-group with links to SCEB and IHB as well,
- Place-making to be a more strategic body, with key cross-thematic membership, possibly with fewer meetings, with oversight of development of the LDF.

#### **Enterprise**

- Need to keep it strategic
- Chance to re-energise
- Little room for enterprise as focus is overwhelmingly on worklessness

- Not sure how this theme fits with place-making (probably at a strategic level with the Local Development Framework)
- Over-reliance on central information resource rather than board members taking direct responsibility for performance areas.