

# Local Area Agreement Toolkit

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## Introduction

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are 3 year agreements between central and local government which set priorities and targets around local need and are delivered by local partners. LAAs are intended to devolve greater responsibility for decision making from central government to the local area, and to ensure that partners – including third sector organisations – are involved.

As LAAs become embedded at local level, so more services are being commissioned in line with LAA priorities, rather than grant-funded. It is crucial for advice agencies to have an understanding of how LAAs work, as they inform the services that are commissioned and funded at a local level.

Advice organisations will need to think strategically about how they can influence their LAA and identify partners from within and without the advice sector, including the Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO), such as the Council for Voluntary Service, which will often facilitate and support the mechanisms through which the third sector engages with the Local Strategic Partnership and influences the LAA.

This toolkit is designed to provide practical guidance on how you can influence the development and contribute to the delivery of your Local Area Agreements. It will help advice agencies identify potential sources of local funding particularly through examining how advice agencies can make a contribution to the achievement of local indicators.

### Why you should read this toolkit

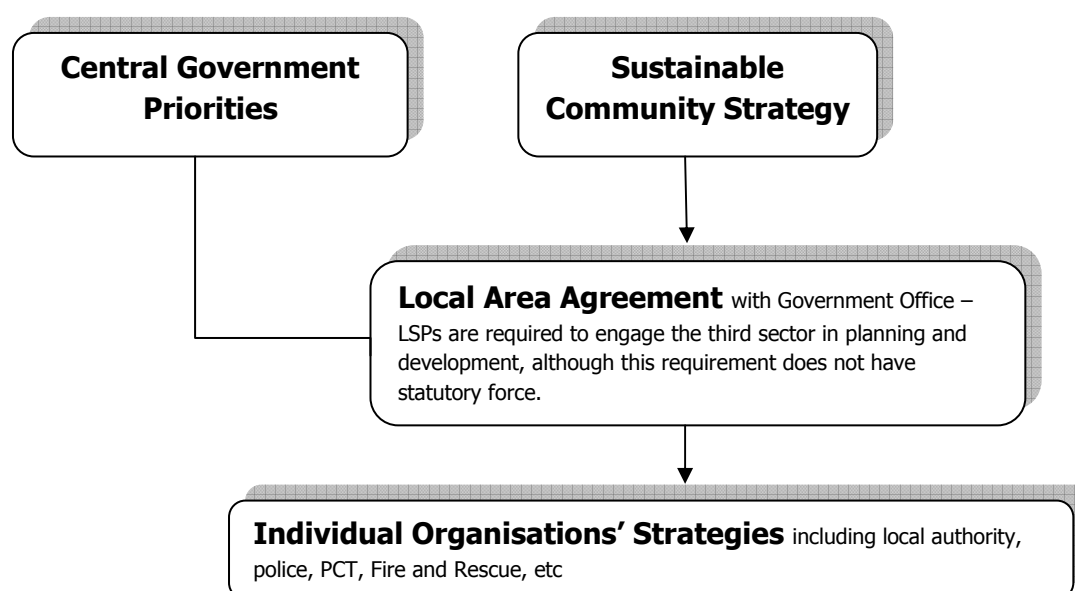
- **Influence local priorities** – help shape the priorities and key indicators in your LAA to ensure the needs of your clients are reflected;
- **Influence how services are commissioned** – as more resources from the public purse take the form of contracts and service level agreements rather than grants, third sector organisations need to influence the design of commissioning frameworks, to make sure bids are judged on the basis of quality outcomes, not lowest price;
- **Identify local priorities to which your organisation contributes** – evidencing client need and demonstrating how your services make a difference and contribute to the achievement of local priorities is the surest way to survive and thrive;
- **Identify partners and allies** – going it alone is not an option. Influence is based on unity and collaboration, and, as resources become tighter, collaborative delivery between agencies will be viewed as more attractive, so use the partnership structures of the LAA to find your perfect match!

## Section 1

### Background to Local Area Agreements and Advice

Local Area Agreements are the agreement between national government and local communities, represented by the local authority, on the three-year priorities<sup>1</sup> for that area, which meet local need and contribute to the achievement of central government objectives.

Local Area Agreements are intended to support the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy which each top-level authority has to produce. This Strategy is agreed by the Local Strategic Partnership. The Local Area Agreement can be seen as a delivery plan that the Local Authority has negotiated with the Government Office to implement the Strategy.



Statutory guidance from central government<sup>2</sup> sets out how the pieces should fit together.

- Local partners in the LSP create a shared long-term vision for their area in the **Sustainable Community Strategy**;
- The **duty to involve** enables local people to influence the vision and priorities;
- **Local Area Agreements** are the means through which local ambitions are delivered;
- The **duty to co-operate** brings about robust partnerships in which all relevant public services engage;

<sup>1</sup> Negotiating New Local Area Agreements, Department for Communities and Local Government, September 2007

<sup>2</sup> Creating strong, safe and prosperous communities, DCLG, July 2008 – pages 12/13

- Partners work together to deliver positive outcomes, in particular through **commissioning**, to ensure best value;
- LAAs form the heart of the new **local performance framework**.

A Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is carried out each year and determines how successful a local area has been in achieving what it set out to in its LAA. The CAA may well present an opportunity to advice agencies. By identifying areas where local areas are not meeting their targets, agencies may be able to negotiate ways in which they can assist their local authorities, for example, meet those targets.

LAAs incorporate a range of indicators through which progress is measured. Indicators fall into three categories.

There are 188 National Indicators, from which each local area must negotiate the key **35 Designated Indicators** which represent their priorities. In addition, every LAA must also designate **16 DCSF<sup>3</sup> Indicators**, focusing on educational attainment, so each area will have 51 priority indicators by which progress will be assessed. However, it should be noted that when it comes to **Comprehensive Area Assessment**, progress against **all** National Indicators will be measured. In addition to the National Indicators, local areas are free to include **Locally Determined Indicators** that local partners agree are important. Partners will not be held to account for achievement of Locally Determined Indicators by central government.

Of the 188 National Indicators there are none that are specific to advice. There has also been a poor take up of the indicators which could be interpreted as relating or linking to advice. It is therefore important for advice organisations to lobby for the inclusion of locally determined indicators that recognise the contribution of advice to the achievement of local ambitions. You are more likely to be successful in this if you can gain support from other advice providers and third sector organisations generally. Get involved in your local advice forum if there is one – if not, speak to other organisations and get advice from AdviceUK about setting one up. Also talk to your local Council for Voluntary Service and find out if there is a Third Sector Forum locally – if so, get involved and make sure the voice of advice is represented.

For more information on Indicators that may be relevant to advice, see **Section 4 – Making the Case for Independent Advice**

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<sup>3</sup> Department for Children, Families and Schools

## Section 2

### Government, Local Government and Advice

#### Local Authorities' view of advice/different approaches

There is **no collective view** from Local Authorities about the provision of advice services. It is a **discretionary** function for Local Authorities. However, some Local Authorities do undertake reviews of advice provision in their areas, for an example please follow the link below to Manchester's Review of Advice Services conducted in 2007. The report of the review can be viewed at the following link:

[http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200024/consultations/3697/review\\_of\\_advice\\_services\\_in\\_manchester/1](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200024/consultations/3697/review_of_advice_services_in_manchester/1)

Under the Local Government and Involvement in Health Act 2007, a number of statutory organisations, such as the Department of Work and Pensions, Primary Care Trusts, etc are required by law to co-operate in the Local Strategic Partnership and contribute to the LAA. The Legal Services Commission (LSC) is **not** one of the bodies required to co-operate. However, if your local authority opts to jointly commission a **Community Legal Advice Service** through joint commissioning with the LSC, this funding will come from the Area Based Grant, so it is important to lobby for the inclusion of locally determined indicators that reflect local advice need and the importance of diverse, independent provision to meet that need.

#### Department of Communities and Local Government

In the Communities and Local Government's (CLG) Annual Report (2009), Local Area Agreements are highlighted as one of the key ways in which the Government are hoping to strengthen local communities. They identify that by placing the LAAs on a statutory basis, local government will be empowered to make decisions affecting their local communities. The report emphasises that:

*"LAAs bring together national and local priorities by allowing local authorities and their delivery partners to agree a set of local targets, chosen from within a National Indicator Set, which address the most important areas for improvement in a locality."*

The Communities and Local Government Annual Report (2009) can be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/annualreport09>

## **Local Government Association**

The Local Government Association was set up in 1997 to act as the advocate for local government on all relevant matters including Local Area Agreements. They have produced a number of documents designed to support Local Authorities with Local Area Agreements, including a guide entitled "Changing places: Local Area Agreements and two-tier local government" – the guide provides councils with practical ideas about successfully implementing the LAAs. The guide can be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications/publication-display.do?id=1032701>

The LGA also provides analysis of the NIs included in LAAs, including regionally and nationally, which can be found at:

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/791870>

## Section 3

### Advice Forums, advice strategies and LAAs

#### LAAs, your advice strategy and future funding

The guidance for Local Strategic Partnerships is to **commission** local services according to the LAA. This means that the route to future funding will increasingly be via Local Area Agreements. Advice providers need to demonstrate how the outcomes they achieve for people are in keeping with the priorities and indicators identified within the LAA, as well as the wider social benefits, and that **advice is therefore worth funding**. The best way to do this is to work with other advice organisations to set up a forum and develop an advice strategy

In various areas across England advice strategies have been developed or are in development. The main model for doing this has been through a group of advice organisations getting together in a **forum or informal consortium**, either with the LA or independently, to map advice provision, needs for advice and gaps in service provision. Depending on the findings of this mapping needs exercise, the advice strategy proposes an action plan for delivering advice in line with needs identified. In some areas the Local Authority has led the process and developed a strategy in consultation with advice organisations.

#### Examples of advice strategies

**Hackney Advice Strategy** was developed by Hackney Council through a working group that included representatives from areas of the Council delivering advice as well as from voluntary, private and other public sector advice providers.

[www.hackney.gov.uk/hackney-advice-strategy2007-2010.pdf](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/hackney-advice-strategy2007-2010.pdf)

**Advice Strategy for Coventry** was drawn up by Advice Services Coventry, and approved by Coventry City Council. It sets out a future for independent social welfare advice services in Coventry. It acknowledges the importance of these services in tackling social exclusion and their role in the successful delivery of the city's Community Plan.

<http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/projects-and-resources/resources/collaborativeresources/collabworking/templates>

As we have seen, the future funding of local services will be informed by LAAs and the needs and priorities identified within them. It is imperative therefore, that advice strategies take account of what is in the LAA. It is important to bear in mind, however, that engaging with LAAs can be very intensive and time-consuming, so it makes sense to be part of a **collaborative group** of advice organisations when embarking on this. A lot of areas also have Third Sector Networks or Assemblies through which the sector engages with the LSP. Advice organisations can also engage with these where they exist, this can help spread the load.

## Other steps to take to link an advice strategy with future funding

- **Talk** to your local authority and build relationships. They too are trying to pick their way through a minefield of new ways of working so if you can offer them **options and solutions**, that can only help the case for advice. Through contact with your council Grants Officer, ask what **new outcomes** the Council is looking for from advice organisations.
- Look outside the advice sector to other services you could collaborate with to offer a more comprehensive solution to local need, for example drug and alcohol services, Credit Unions, housing support or care providers. These may find it easier to establish a direct link to NIs, but their services would be enhanced by an advice component.
- **Collaboratively**, from within your forum start to think about what advice delivers and identify the indicators under which you could argue it makes a difference. Prepare a **business case**, based on evidence of need. This is where an advice strategy comes in. If you're not already involved then get on the radar of your CVS, your LSP representatives, council officers, councillors etc. **See Section 9.**

## Influence local policy through your Advice Forum

Advice organisations within a local area need to be proactive and get into the habit of thinking strategically and collaboratively amongst themselves. An advice forum is a good vehicle for this. In order to influence local priorities and work towards recognition of the value of advice in achieving local targets, the advice forum should aim to get representation on the LSP or partnerships that feed into it such as the community partnership (or equivalent in a specific area).

The statutory guidance<sup>4</sup> states that local authorities should ensure that all partners, including the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector, have the opportunity to influence decision-making and delivery of services where possible through the LSP framework. The idea is that all partners that could contribute to the preparation and attainment of LAA targets are included.

Barnet CAB, for example, set out to influence the agenda in 2008 by producing a report on debt in Barnet entitled '*A First Class Suburb in Debt*'. This set out how the current economic climate is affecting Barnet residents, what effect this may have on Barnet's Sustainable Community Strategy (produced by each LSP) and how Barnet CAB could help the Council in alleviating the problems of debt locally. This was circulated to all members of the Local Strategic Partnership and local councillors

<sup>4</sup> Creating strong, safe and prosperous communities, DCLG, July 2008

Your advice forum could produce a similar report to feed into the LSP process, or alternatively include a section in an advice strategy document with similar themes, that link into local priorities. The next stage would be to sign up to deliver towards the local targets.

However, the reality is that LAAs can't and won't capture everything public bodies do so advice organisations need to keep on top of the Sustainable Community Strategy and individual partners' strategies and policies.

You should give consideration to the way you think about advice within your advice forum or consortium. **Focus on outcomes.** What do local people need and how do your services meet that need? What difference do you make? What would be lost if you weren't there?

### **Developing an advice strategy**

See ADP Consultancy guidance tool: <http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/projects-and-resources/resources/collaborativeresources/adviceforums/toolkits>

## Section 4

### Your Organisation – Making the Case for Independent Advice

In each local area covered by an LAA, partners will have agreed the **35 indicators** by which they will measure success, though it should be noted that local authorities will be assessed against all **188 indicators**, so if a particular NI is not included in your own Local Strategic Partnership's 35 key indicators, it is worth talking to your link officer at the local authority for more information. In some areas, the LAA may also include locally determined indicators, agreed by the local authority, partners and Government Office. These may also provide opportunities for advice organisations to demonstrate their contribution, and will be monitored locally, though will not form part of the mandatory national performance framework. You can find out which NIs have been agreed for your area at:

<http://www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk/default.aspx>.

The following tables identify the central government targets and indicators to which advice could be seen to contribute. It is based on the **National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions** published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in May 2008

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/finalnationalindicators>

and, where relevant, updated in February 2009.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/11471951.pdf>

The targets listed are taken from central government departments' Public Service Agreements for the period 2008 – 2011. The tables do not include all targets or NIs – only those which have relevance to advice outcomes. Of those listed, we have identified two types for this toolkit – those to which advice can be seen to make a direct contribution, and those – for example, the first set (NIs 151 and 152) – whose achievement it could be argued are indirectly supported by the outcomes of advice.

- **Where advice can make a direct contribution to the achievement of the NI, it appears in bold type.**
- *Where the contribution of advice is indirect, but it can still be argued to play a role, the information is in italics.*

The tables are not exhaustive, nor based on extensive research, although research that supports the establishment of a link is highlighted and referenced in the

**Further Reading** section<sup>5</sup>. Identifying those NIs to which independent advice can be seen to contribute, should help focus attention and enable you to collect evidence of outcomes and impact that contribute to locally agreed goals.

Creativity is needed in demonstrating your contribution to the LAA. Remember, success in many of the NIs highlighted may involve you **challenging public sector partners**, so you need to present your case **positively**, focusing on the overall improvements to people's lives that your organisation facilitates.

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<sup>5</sup> See also The Case for Advice, ASA, 2006 at <http://www.asauk.org.uk/fileLibrary/pdf/case4advice.pdf>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
PSA 8 – Maximise employment opportunity for all	NI 151  NI 152	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall employment rate (working age)</li> <li>Working age people on out of work benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>WB</b> – ensuring entitlement to tax credits and in work benefits maximises opportunities for sustainable employment</li> <li><b>Housing</b> – permanent accommodation and stability of tenure enhances employment options</li> <li><b>Employment</b> – advice on rights at work, National Minimum Wage, contractual issues promotes quality employment which is more sustainable</li> <li><b>Immigration</b> – resolving immigration status to achieve eligibility to work</li> <li><b>General</b> – research demonstrates that advice intervention reduces stress, enabling clients to gain greater control over their lives</li> <li><b>Volunteering</b> – advice services’ involvement of volunteers provides high quality and accredited learning. Improves confidence, skills, experience and qualifications</li> </ul>
PSA 9 – Halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-11, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020	NI 116	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Proportion of children in poverty</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Measures</b> the proportion of children who live in families in receipt of out of work benefits and working families whose income is below 60% of the median income</p> <p><i>"This ... includes the delivery of key public services that are critical to improving poor children's life chances; coordination of activities by key local players to reduce worklessness and poverty; the tailoring of solutions to meet needs of local people; and ensuring engagement of individuals and groups at risk of being marginalised"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>WB</b> – ensuring entitlement to tax credits and in work benefits maximises opportunities for sustainable employment</li> <li><b>Debt</b> – resolution of debt problems and avoidance of recovery action leading to greater stabilisation of circumstances and options for clients, including employment and progression at work</li> <li><b>Housing</b> – permanent accommodation and stability of tenure enhances options including training and employment</li> <li><b>Employment</b> – advice on rights at work, National Minimum Wage, contractual issues promotes quality employment which is more sustainable</li> <li><b>Volunteering</b> – advice services’ involvement of volunteers provides high quality and accredited learning. Improves confidence, skills, experience and qualifications</li> </ul>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
<p>PSA 11 – Narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers</p>	<p>NI 102</p> <p>NI 106</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected standard at Key Stages 2 and 4</li> <li>Young people from low income backgrounds progressing to higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Housing</b> – Research by Shelter<sup>1</sup> demonstrates the links between insecure and poor quality housing and educational attainment. Resolving bad housing circumstances will address these impacts</li> <li><b>WB</b> – ensuring entitlement to tax credits and in work benefits maximises opportunities for sustainable employment</li> <li><b>Debt</b> – resolution of debt problems and avoidance of recovery action leading to greater stabilisation of circumstances and options for clients, including employment</li> <li><b>Employment</b> – advice on rights at work, National Minimum Wage, contractual issues promotes sustainable, quality employment</li> </ul>
<p><b>PSA 12 – Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people</b></p>	<p>NI 50</p> <p>NI 52</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional health of children</li> <li><b>Take up of school lunches</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Housing</b> – bad and temporary accommodation can have a significant impact on a child’s ability to make and sustain friendships and on their relationships in general<sup>2</sup></li> <li><b>WB</b> – ensuring income maximisation that facilitates successful claims of passporting benefits increases the take up of school lunches</li> <li><b>Debt</b> – ensuring income maximisation that facilitates successful claims of passporting benefits increases the take up of school lunches</li> </ul>
<p>PSA 13 – Improve young people’s safety</p>	<p>NI 70</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people</li> </ul> <p><b>“Accidents are the leading cause of injury to children and disproportionately affect children from lower socio-economic groups”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice services can address some of the circumstances that contribute to accidents to young people, which, as indicated, disproportionately affect children from lower socio-economic groups<sup>3</sup>.</li> <li><b>Housing</b> – Research by Shelter<sup>4</sup> demonstrates the higher incidence of accidents in households in bad and temporary housing. Resolving these issues will directly address this NI</li> </ul>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
<p><b>PSA 14 – Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success</b></p>	<p><b>NI 117</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Housing</b> – stable accommodation enhances training and employment options for young people in housing need</li> <li>• <b>Employment</b> – advice on rights at work, National Minimum Wage, contractual issues promotes quality employment which is more sustainable</li> <li>• <b>Education</b> – support regarding school entrance or disciplinary or bullying issues can have an impact on educational outcomes for young people</li> <li>• <b>General</b> – research demonstrates that advice intervention reduces stress, enabling clients to gain greater control over their lives</li> <li>• <b>Volunteering</b> – advice services’ involvement of volunteers provides high quality and accredited learning. Improves confidence, skills, experience and qualifications</li> </ul>
<p><b>PSA 15 – Address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief</b></p>	<p><b>NI 140</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fair treatment by local services</b></li> </ul> <p><i>"Fair treatment by others is a critical component of removing inequalities of process, which create unjust barriers to involvement...individuals from equalities groups are more likely to feel they have not been treated with respect."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Access to advice services can enable individuals who may feel they have received less favourable treatment to secure rights to which they are entitled, but may have been denied.</b></li> <li>• <b>Advice services are likely to spot instances in which individuals have been subject to less favourable treatment at the hands of public services and can challenge practices or behaviour that discriminate against particular groups</b></li> <li>• <b>Advice services that interact with public service providers can influence how those services are delivered, through the gathering of social-policy evidence, which, if acted on, could remove the impression or reality of discriminatory practice. This could include welfare benefits, housing and homelessness, community care, immigration, debt or education</b></li> </ul>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
<p><b>PSA 16 – Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training</b></p>	<p><b>NI 143</b></p> <p><b>NI 145</b></p> <p><b>NI 147</b></p> <p><b>NI 149</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Offenders under probation supervision living in settled accommodation at the end of their order or licence</b></li> <li>• <b>Adults with learning disabilities in settled accommodation</b></li> <li>• <b>Care leavers in suitable accommodation</b></li> <li>• <b>Adults in contact with secondary mental health services in settled accommodation</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Housing</b> – provision of housing advice to improve access to settled accommodation. In the case of offenders, this relates to both quality of the accommodation and the location. Security of tenure is key for people with learning disabilities</li> <li>• <b>Debt</b> – resolution of liabilities could enhance access, eg in the case of rent arrears from former properties, and stability of housing</li> <li>• <b>WB</b> – access to support with housing costs and other benefits will enhance affordability and stability of accommodation</li> <li>• <b>General</b> – advice services can enable access to support services to ensure client is supported to sustain a tenancy</li> </ul>
<p><i><b>PSA 17 – Tackle poverty and promote greater independence and well-being in later life</b></i></p>	<p><i>NI 137</i></p> <p><b>NI 139</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Healthy life expectancy at age 65</i></li> <li>• <b>The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Healthy Life Expectancy is the period in which someone can expect to live in reasonable health in older age. The impact of stress on a range of indicators including smoking, mental ill-health, lack of social engagement, lack of exercise, etc is well-documented. The impact of advice could be said to reduce stress and its attendant negative indicators.</i></li> <li>• <b>Community Care</b> – community care advice can ensure correct assessment of older people’s needs for independent living and support them to access their rights to services</li> <li>• <b>WB</b> – income maximisation will support older people’s ability to live independently by ensuring they access the range of pension credits and benefits available to them</li> <li>• <b>General</b> – Access to advice services, particularly delivered through active outreach to older people is likely to significantly increase the range of services to which they have access</li> </ul>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
<p><b>PSA 18 – Promote better health and well-being for all</b></p>	<p>NI 123</p> <p>NI 136</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Stopping smoking</i></li> <li>• <b>People supported to live independently through social services (all adults)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Whilst difficult to evidence a direct link, the impact that advice can have on stress levels could be argued to enhance individuals’ potential for stopping smoking</i></li> <li>• <b>Community Care</b> – this indicator measures the number of adults receiving any amount of care or support to live independently and, as such, community care advice could make a significant contribution to its achievement, by ensuring that assessments are carried out and identify – and deliver – appropriate packages of support to individuals</li> </ul>
<p><b>PSA 19 – Ensure better care for all</b></p>	<p>NI 127</p> <p>(NI 135)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self reported experience of social care users</b></li> <li>• <b>Carers receiving assessment or review and a specific carer’s service, or advice and information</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Care</b> – the direct experience of care recipients is likely to be enhanced if they have access to independent advice to enable them to access assessments and appropriate services</li> <li>• <b>General</b> – NI 135 is not included as an indicator for this specific PSA target, but is nonetheless an important indicator for advice services, as it is the only NI that actually mentions advice and information. Enabling carers to “continue with their lives, families, work and contribution to their communities” through assessment of their needs and provision of appropriate services, including advice and information is measured. Independent advice is not mentioned specifically, but providers could work with carers’ organisations to deliver advice and information</li> </ul>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
<p>PSA 21 – Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities</p>	<p>NI 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area</li> </ul> <p>"...thriving places in which a fear of difference is replaced by a shared set of values and a shared sense of purpose and belonging. The aim of doing so is to ensure that the economic and cultural benefits of diversity are experienced by everyone in each community, recognising that this means promoting similar life opportunities for all."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General</b> – access to advice can have the benefit of equalising access to services and to rights and so addressing the impact of direct or indirect discrimination. Providing access to advice across all communities can challenge common misconceptions about new communities accessing services to which they frequently have less access and often no entitlement</li> </ul>
<p>PSA 23 – Make communities safer</p>	<p>NI 32</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat incidents of domestic violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Housing</b> - securing accommodation for victims of domestic violence and their families, which is appropriately located is a key element of secure resettlement, which can help prevent reoccurrence of violence</li> <li>• <b>WB</b> – Assisting victims of domestic violence to resolve benefit claims, ensuring maximisation of benefits, can be a key element of secure resettlement</li> <li>• <b>Debt</b> – Assisting victims of domestic violence to resolve benefit claims, ensuring maximisation of benefits, can be a key element of secure resettlement</li> </ul>
<p>CLG DSO – Support local government that empowers individuals and communities and delivers high quality services efficiently</p>	<p>NI 14  NI 179</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing avoidable contact [with services]: minimising the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer</li> <li>• Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008-09 financial year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General</b> – advice organisations can contribute significantly to both these NIs, through the gathering and presentation of social policy evidence of public services failing to meet customers’ needs. AdviceUK has piloted a Systems Thinking approach, which sees advice as part of a wider system and recognises its contribution to the improvement of public services<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
<p>CLG DSO – Build prosperous communities by improving the economic performance of cities, sub-regions and local areas, <b>promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation</b></p>	<p>NI 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall general satisfaction with local area</li> </ul> <p>Measured through perceptions of satisfaction with the local area in the biennial Place Survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>WB &amp; Debt</b> – income maximisation, eg through take-up campaigns and individual casework, contribute to tackling deprivation</li> <li><b>Employment</b> – advice on rights at work, National Minimum Wage, contractual issues promotes quality employment which is more sustainable</li> <li><b>Housing</b> – improving access to secure, quality housing tackles deprivation</li> <li><b>General</b> – the contribution of advice to enabling individuals to access rights and enhance their income, housing, employment rights</li> <li><b>Volunteering</b> – advice services’ involvement of volunteers provides high quality and accredited learning. Improves confidence, skills, experience and qualifications</li> </ul>
<p>CLG DSO – To develop communities that are cohesive, active and resilient to extremism</p>	<p>NI 1  NI 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area</li> <li>% of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>General</b> – access to advice can have the benefit of equalising access to services and to rights and so addressing the impact of direct or indirect discrimination. Providing access to advice across all communities can challenge common misconceptions about new communities accessing services to which they frequently have less access and often no entitlement</li> </ul>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
<p>CO DSO – Drive delivery of the Prime Minister’s cross-cutting priorities to improve outcomes for the most excluded people in society and enable a thriving third sector</p>	<p>NI 6  NI 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in regular volunteering</li> <li>• Environment for a thriving third sector</li> </ul> <p>These are the only two indicators that specifically target the third sector<sup>6</sup>. NI 7 is seen as both an end in itself and a means to an end, in enabling the sector to take a greater role in shaping and delivering services, for example through commissioning.</p> <p>Contact your local CVS and find out if NI 6/7 are included in your local area’s indicators. If not, add your voice to third sector lobbying to include them. Ask the CVS if there is a Third Sector Network and if so, get involved – it’s the best way to get your voice heard.</p> <p>Identify other third sector organisations, working in other spheres, with whom you could collaborate to offer comprehensive and competitive services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General</b> – Independent advice services have a significant contribution to make in helping to design services to meet the needs of excluded communities and in delivering advice services that meet local need, and combat poverty, discrimination and other aspects of disadvantage</li> <li>• <b>Volunteering</b> – advice services’ involvement of volunteers provides high quality and accredited learning. Improves confidence, skills, experience and qualifications</li> </ul>
<p>DCSF DSO – Secure the well-being and health of children and young people</p>	<p>(NI 50)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Emotional health of children</i></li> </ul> <p><i>This is measured by a survey of a sample of children in School Years 6, 8 and 10 on their relationships with friends and parents.</i></p>	<p><b>Housing</b> – bad and temporary accommodation can have a significant impact on a child’s ability to make and sustain friendships and on their relationships in general<sup>7</sup></p> <p><b>General</b> – the benefits of advice interventions on emotional health and stress levels are documented in Further Reading</p>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
<i>DCSF DSO – Close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds</i>	NI 81  NI 82	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19</i></li> <li><i>Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19</i></li> </ul>	<i>These NIs are measured through the achievement of qualifications and so a direct link to advice would be unprovable. However, the impact of social exclusion on educational outcomes is well-documented and advice can justly claim to address this<sup>8</sup></i>
<b>DCSF DSO – Keep children and young people on the path to success</b>	<b>NI 114</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Rate of permanent exclusions from school</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Education</b> – advice and advocacy on disciplinary issues can reduce the incidence of permanent exclusions</li> </ul>
<i>DH DSO – Ensure better health and well-being for all</i>	NI 119	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Self-reported measure of people’s overall health and wellbeing</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>This NI is measured by self-perception evidence from the biennial Place Survey</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>WB &amp; Debt</b> – income maximisation, eg through take-up campaigns and individual casework, contribute to tackling deprivation and can enhance physical and emotional health</li> <li><b>Housing</b> – improving access to secure quality housing can have a marked impact on health and wellbeing</li> <li><b>Volunteering</b> – advice services’ involvement of volunteers can improve confidence, skills, experience and qualifications. There is significant evidence of the impact of volunteering on health and wellbeing<sup>9</sup></li> <li><b>General</b> – the benefits of advice interventions on emotional health and stress levels are documented in Further Reading</li> </ul>

Relevant departmental PSA targets	National Indicators	What does the NI Measure?	How could advice contribute?
DH DSO – Ensure better care for all	(NI 127)  NI 132  NI 135	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Self-reported experience of social care users)</li> <li>• Timeliness of adult social care assessment (all adults)</li> <li>• Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer’s service, or advice and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>WB</b> – income maximisation to ensure that people with care needs are in receipt of the full range of benefits to facilitate payment for care as required</li> <li>• <b>Community Care</b> – advice, information and advocacy for new and existing users of care services will assist them to maximise their rights to care and so enhance the quality of their experience and their assessment of the service</li> </ul>
<p>DIUS DSO – Improve the skills of the population throughout their working lives to create a workforce capable of sustaining economic competitiveness, and enable individuals to thrive in the global economy</p> <p>DWP DSO – Maximise employment opportunity for all</p>	NI 174  NI 118  NI 153	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills gap in the current workforce reported by employers</li> <li>• Take up of formal childcare by low-income working families</li> <li>• Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>WB / Debt</b> – income maximisation, in particular in relation to Tax Credits, can facilitate the take up of childcare by working families</li> <li>• <b>Volunteering</b> – advice services’ involvement of volunteers provides high quality and accredited learning. Improves confidence, skills, experience and qualifications. The link from volunteering to employment is well-established<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>
DWP DSO – Pay our customers the right benefits at the right time	NI 180  NI 181	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of changes of circumstances which affect customers’ HB/CTB benefit entitlement within the year</li> <li>• Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General</b> – social policy evidence used strategically can influence how benefit services operate and minimise errors. A Systems Thinking approach that sees advice as part of wider system can be particularly powerful in addressing the ‘failure demand’ placed on advice services by public service mistakes<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>

## Section 5

### LAAs and Partnership and Collaborative Working

As has been shown elsewhere in this guide, there is only **one explicit reference** to advice in the National Indicators. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that on careful examination, there are a range of indicators where advice has a potential role to play.

The challenge for many advice organisations will be firstly to get such NIs included in their Local Area Agreement and secondly to convince those who commission services that their organisation is well placed to deliver such services.

In the first instance, there may well be great benefit in coming together with other advice organisations in an advice forum or to set one up if one does not already exist. AdviceUK has undertaken a lot of work around the country supporting the development of advice forums - see website for further information. Having a shared and common voice will help ensure that advice is taken on board by the LSP when putting the LAA together. The existence of an advice strategy, **see section 3 above**, will help put advice organisations in a stronger position, particularly if the Local Authority has engaged with its development.

A collaborative approach by advice organisations, either through advice forums or an advice strategy will help demonstrate to the LSP that advice organisations are working in co-ordinated and joined up fashion.

It is also important for advice organisations to foster and develop links with organisations in a range of different sectors. Consider organisations working with younger people, older people, carers' organisations, or groups working with mental health or unemployment. The LAA may well have NIs attached to some of these areas and advice organisation may well be able to help specialist organisations working in these area meet a particular NI.

#### **NI 145 – Adults with learning disabilities in settled accommodation**

A mainstream generalist advice organisation might not, on the face of it, have a large role to play in achieving this indicator. However, there might well be the possibility that they could work in partnership with a specialist organisation working in this area to help adults with learning disabilities access support with housing costs and other benefits which can support their tenancy and the stability of their accommodation.

You can find further information about advice forums and partnership and collaborative working at:

<http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/projects-and-resources/resources/collaborativeresources>

## Section 6

### Outcomes, Monitoring and Evaluation

Outcomes tell you whether your service is making a difference. You may be required by your funders to evidence outputs and outcomes, but you will be most successful at **engaging staff and collecting quality** evidence if your starting point is being able to understand the **impact** your organisation makes on people's lives.

Where advice services are funded through service level agreements or other contractual arrangements, funding bodies will normally specify the outputs and outcomes required and ask advice services to collect data as evidence that these have been achieved. Where grant funding is given, there may be no requirement for the advice agency to monitor or provide data on outcomes or outputs. However, many local authorities are now moving towards commissioning for advice services and the Legal Services Commission in particular has always adopted a commissioning approach.

In a climate of increased competition for funding, it is essential that not-for-profit advice services are able to present evidence of value for money and of the contribution their services make to core government objectives. Even if outcomes are specified by funders, it is advantageous for advice services to influence this process and to ensure that their services are measured against criteria which reflect their actual impact on clients' circumstances.

#### Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes

In many cases, outcomes will be expressed in terms of hard or quantitative data – such as money gained for clients; numbers of social security appeals won; number of clients gaining leave to remain in the U.K. Outputs are almost always expressed in quantitative terms: numbers of people receiving advice; opening times for advice sessions; numbers of cases opened or closed. Quantitative data is attractive to funders because it is easy to analyse and allows comparisons to be made between different providers.

Quantitative data alone does not give a complete picture of what is achieved for clients through advice work. Even if the funding body does not specify "soft" or qualitative outcomes, it is generally worthwhile for the agency to collect this data as a means of demonstrating the value of its work and in particular the ways in which advice contributes to the achievement of Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets. For example, some agencies follow up clients 3 or 6 months after their case was closed to find out what happened and ask questions about the difference made, for example, in having more money to spend, reducing stress, etc.

If quantitative data is used – e.g. by a local authority – to compare the performance of different advice services, it is important both that the advice agency collects information about qualitative outcomes to supplement the hard data, and also that there is an agreement with the funding body as to how quantitative outcomes are

defined. For example: "money gained" for clients (e.g. as a result of welfare benefits advice) should specify how this is to be calculated – to ensure consistency and fairness in comparing different providers.

AdviceUK's BOLD project is working with New Economics Foundation (nef) to develop and pilot an outcomes-based approach to advice service commissioning. For more information, see <http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/projects-and-resources/projects/bold>

### Outcomes to meet LAA targets

Whether or not an advice agency currently receives funding from its local authority, it is in its interests to demonstrate a link between advice and local strategic priorities. Where a local authority includes within its LAA targets to which advice services clearly contribute, the task will be straightforward. For example, <sup>6</sup> Norfolk has adopted National Indicator (NI) 135: "*Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carers' service or advice and information*"; Leicester City has adopted NI142: "*Vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living*". A service providing advice in community care or welfare benefits would have little difficulty in presenting both quantitative and qualitative data in relation to these targets.

However the link between advice services and LAA objectives is often more tenuous and the advice service will sometimes need to exercise imagination in identifying outcomes which contribute to LAA aims. For example, an advice agency which targets ex-offenders should gather data to show that advice on debt, welfare benefits and housing helps diminish the likelihood of adults re-offending (NI 018 "*Adult re-offending rates for those under probation supervision*"); advice services offering "better off" calculations and advice on income maximisation and debt problems will be able to show how their work contributes to NI 118 "*Take up of formal childcare by low-income working families*". Many NIs relate to targets to reduce poverty and inequality, promote community cohesion etc. and the contribution of advice services to these aims should not be too difficult to demonstrate. See Section 4 - Making the Case for Independent Advice.

### Monitoring

*"In 2009, the Bluebridge Advice Centre helped 50 young ex-offenders to obtain and retain housing, to resolve their debt issues and, where appropriate, to claim out-of-work benefits. Of these, 30 have entered employment or training and none have re-offended".*

A statement such as this is a powerful indication that the advice service is making a significant contribution to the achievement of its LAA targets. In order to make such a statement with confidence, however, Bluebridge Advice Centre will need to be familiar with the priorities of its LAA; identify those priorities to which its service

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk>

contributes; and devise monitoring procedures which enable it to capture and analyse the necessary supporting evidence.

Advice agencies should ensure that they capture any data which may be useful as evidence of their success in meeting LAA targets. In addition to routine equalities data (age, ethnicity etc.), it may be advantageous to collect information about, for example:-

- Housing status (incl. homelessness) and tenure
- Whether the client is working or receiving out-of-work benefits
- Family composition – incl. whether a single parent
- Health problems incl. disability
- Data specific to the client group – e.g.<sup>7</sup> NEET (young people); ward or geographical area; whether a carer for a disabled person

Monitoring of outcomes may present a greater challenge. In most cases, funders will require quantitative information such as money gained, numbers of clients gaining paid employment etc. The advice agency should also consider defining and monitoring qualitative outcomes applicable to the type of advice they provide which will augment the hard data. For example, the following types of outcomes may be appropriate to LAA targets:-

- Clients gaining paid work following advice on in-work benefits, debt etc.
- Homeless clients obtaining housing following advice
- Clients reporting an improvement in their mental or physical health as a result of being able to resolve their debts, increase their income, obtain employment etc.
- Disabled or older people able to remain in their own homes following advice on community care and welfare benefits matters

### **Data Collection Methods**

Gathering, recording and analysing data may be seen as an additional burden for advice agencies which are already struggling to meet demand from their clients. In practice, though, once the agency has decided what information it needs to collect, existing methods of data collection and analysis, whether manual or electronic, can usually be adapted to gather the additional data. For example, the agency's standard enquiry or case record form can be amended to ensure that all the relevant factual data about a client is gathered at the first interview.

Information about outcomes can generally be gathered only after the client's case or enquiry has been concluded. The method of acquiring the information will be tailored to the client group. For example, a questionnaire sent to the client in a pre-

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<sup>7</sup> "Not in education, employment or training"

paid envelope, to include questions which will elicit the sort of information listed above, may be appropriate for some clients – but many advice services have found that brief face-to-face or telephone interviews with clients are more effective.

The longer-term impact of the advice service can only be gauged by some follow-up contact after the case has been concluded (e.g. a telephone call to a housing client to see whether s/he has been able to retain the tenancy). Advice services which form part of an holistic service for a given client group may find it easier to gather this information since the client is likely to continue using the agency after the advice matter has been resolved. If the agency cannot allocate paid staff to do this work, volunteers trained in client care skills could be deployed to obtain outcomes data.

## Evaluation

Evaluation is an activity which should form part of the advice agency's internal planning and review processes rather than being merely imposed by funders. Again, there is an opportunity for an advice agency to influence the selection of criteria for any external evaluation by presenting its own evidence of the impact of its work upon LAA targets. Evaluation should include reference to the ways in which the advice service complements the work of other local organisations – statutory and voluntary – to achieve tangible improvements in clients' circumstances. For example, an evaluation report may refer to the success of a local referral network which ensures that clients approaching any advice service are able to access a range of advice provision. An advice service which serves a designated client group may have developed productive links with another agency – such as a Children's Centre, Connexions office, probation service – and can demonstrate how this relationship enhances its impact upon client groups which feature prominently within deprivation indices and LAA priorities.

An advice agency's evaluation of its services might include a statement such as:

*"The Bluebridge Advice Centre provides training to staff at the Bluebridge Connexions service to enable them to identify young people with social welfare problems. Connexions staff arrange appointments at their own premises for young people with advisers from Bluebridge Advice Centre. As a result of this, in 2009, 50 NEET young people facing homelessness were helped to obtain or retain accommodation and to access work, training or education. The relationship between Connexions and Bluebridge Advice Centre has provided a model for partnerships which are to be developed with the Bluebridge probation service and the Bluebridge Children's Centre in order to improve access to advice for ex-offenders and families on low incomes"*

## **Action Summary**

1. Find out what priorities (i.e. national or locally determined indicators) your local authority has adopted
2. Use the tables at Section 4 to identify any priorities which relate closely to advice work and any others to which advice work may contribute
3. Prepare a simple statement of how the advice service helps meet these priorities. This helps to clarify issues and enables you to present them clearly to colleagues.
4. Decide what information you need to gather, both quantitative and qualitative (client data, outputs, outcomes) to demonstrate how your service contributes to these priorities
5. Devise methods of capturing and analysing the data and decide who will do this work.
6. Keep a record of all requests for advice and the areas of law in which they fall: this is useful in demonstrating changes in demand and supply gaps.
7. Accept that there may be opposition from staff who may resist changes which appear to create work. Ensure that everyone understands the reasons for the changes and is able to implement them.
8. Present monitoring and evaluation information to the local authority in an attractive format – e.g. an annual report with illustrations and an executive summary if the report is lengthy.
9. Identify key decision-makers (officers and councillors) to whom the information is to be sent and consider follow-up calls and requests to meet or invitations to visit your agency.
10. Present a simple advice delivery plan for your local authority (LA) area, preferably in partnership with other advice agencies – particularly useful if the LA does not already have one.

## Section 7

### Checklists – Steps to influencing and contributing to your LAA

- ✓ Look at the services you offer and identify the indicators for your local area to which your organisation could contribute. Make the case for the value of your contribution (based on evidence of need and delivery) and lobby for involvement by engaging with LSP representatives. This might include your local Council for Voluntary Service or voluntary sector representative on the LSP, council officers, councillors, or representatives from the local PCT.
- ✓ Band together with others to strengthen the voice of third sector advice providers. Join your local advice network or forum, or start one up if it doesn't already exist. Develop an advice strategy and make use of the support on offer from AdviceUK
- ✓ Engage with those who attend LSP meetings so that your views are represented
- ✓ If you receive funding from one of the Local Strategic Partners, engage with your key contact (for example Grants Officer or Contract Monitoring Officer from the local council). Ask them what impact the LAA is having on your income stream and, if applicable, what new outcomes they are looking for.
- ✓ Understand the indicators. There are two indicators that relate directly to the third sector, but there are many more which third sector organisations will be able to deliver against. How can advice providers help the LSP achieve these? Can advice providers show evidence of their outcomes? Which groups do they work with that the local authority or other key partners would have trouble reaching?
- ✓ Is competitive tendering on the horizon? There is a clear movement towards public sector partners commissioning services from other organisations to meet LAA targets. If commissioning is being considered in your area, find out how the process is likely to work and what the timetable is. Get involved as early as possible in influencing the commissioning process – don't wait until decisions have been made about what kind of services are wanted, and how they should be delivered – that will be too late!

- ✓ Start looking around now for other organisations working in similar fields. Collaborative working and a history of delivering services in partnership with others is likely to be the key to success.
- ✓ Lobby the LSP to keep local grants. Central Government does recognise the importance of small grants schemes and statutory guidance says: "Grants, alongside contracts, have a crucial role and should be used where they are more appropriate..." (*DCLG, op cit, July 2008*). Many organisations are lobbying for a 'mixed economy of VCS funding' – grants, service level agreements and commissioning – to recognise different stages of development within the VCS and the need for time to adapt to new funding systems.
- ✓ Think differently about how organisations operate. Advice organisations bring all sorts of extra community benefits through their services – including cohesion, improved quality of life and the ability to lever extra funding into the borough. Being able to express your services in these terms – especially financial – will help your chances of receiving funding within the framework of your LAA.
- ✓ Look for alternative sources of non-statutory funding: engaging with LAAs can be very bureaucratic and time-consuming and should not be under-estimated. For smaller groups it may be worth looking at what other funding streams are available. Don't assume your current funding from key players such as the local council will continue – make contingency plans. Announcements on the future of grants may well be made at short notice.

## Section 8

### Case Studies - How Advice Organisations influenced their LAA.

#### **Havering CAB: A stretch target for benefit take-up - Heather Ball, Borough Director, Havering CAB**

My LAA project builds on a 3 year benefit take-up project the bureau ran in partnership with other local agencies. This project had considerable success in a borough which is known to have a low welfare benefit take up, gaining almost £2 million in unclaimed benefits. A report was produced and widely circulated. This helped to gain recognition for the CAB in the borough and brought the vast under claiming of welfare benefit to the forefront.

When the LAA was first being discussed, I was able to suggest that the benefit take-up campaign could be continued with funding as part of the LAA. This gained support from the local authority's Head of Finance and was placed on the "potential" list.

The local authority decided to introduce a sub-group of the Strategic Partnership to address each strand of the LAA and to include a voluntary sector representative in each. I was asked to join the "more prosperous community" group – which addresses the economy and enterprise strands of the LAA.

I then set about attending as many training sessions on the LAA as possible, ploughing through the various mailings and trying to remain one step ahead of the game. It was extremely time consuming but it helped when attending meetings, as often I was better informed than some of the others.

I was then able to lobby the chair of the sub-group for funding as I was aware that the "stretch targets" attracted pump priming funds. Luckily I was able to gain the support of the manager of the local authority's welfare rights section, who offered to provide a secondee to jointly deliver the target.

After many meetings of interested parties, it was agreed to list the take-up project as one of the potential stretch targets on the list to Government Office London (GOL). Various communications and even more meetings followed to iron out "baseline figures" and actual final targets, including "reward shares". Eventually the targets were all agreed between GOL and signed off by the Strategic Partnership.

## Practical points to consider

Challenges	Top tips
Raise the profile of advice	<p>I was lucky that the groundwork was done by the previous project and I had a widely publicised report which evidenced the value of a local targeted campaign for benefit take-up.</p> <p><i>Where possible use evidence of similar work</i></p>
Obtaining funding to deliver any target	<p>I could not deliver any target under the LAA without funding and had to emphasise this at every meeting.</p> <p><i>Don't be afraid to say that you need funds to support the work – be prepared to back this with financial evidence if necessary</i></p>
Obtaining the appropriate support	<p>Although I had the support of partners from the previous project, I needed to work with more senior and influential people. I had to get out of my "comfort zone" and push this option onto the agenda</p> <p><i>Use your local knowledge and push yourself forward</i></p>
Meetings, meetings!!!	<p>I had to make time to attend endless meetings about the LAA – but it paid off.</p> <p>I am sure the fact that I kept turning up at all of the meetings helped to keep the project in the forefront of people's minds</p> <p><i>If at all possible be there!!</i></p>
Research	<p>I kept as up to date as possible and attended various training courses on LAA preparation.</p> <p><i>Get on mailing lists and attend briefings if possible</i></p>
Don't give up – there were innumerable re-writes of the target.	<p>I had to keep going back to GOL with re-writes until they were satisfied with the target. Then I had to get the Strategic Partnership to agree it.</p> <p><i>If possible use previous LAA targets as drafts – it would have saved me a lot of time and effort</i></p>
If possible get a "stretch target" – they attract a share of the reward fund	<p>If successful, my target will obtain a share of the reward pot.</p>

## **Tim Clark, Barnet CAB: Establishing contacts through the Local Strategic Partnership**

In 2008, Barnet's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) included a Community Steering Group (CSG), which comprised a wide range of community based organisations, including voluntary sector organisations, faith groups and community organisations. The purpose of the CSG was to help get the voice of local residents to be heard by the LSP Executive – especially in the context of the local area agreement - and it was allowed to place one item on the agenda of each meeting of the LSP.

Although the CSG structure was later abandoned in favour of an online method of communicating with the LSP, the contacts made as a result of being a member of the CSG were to prove useful.

Even in 2008 one of the main issues in Barnet was rising debt. Barnet CAB produced a report on the levels and impact of debt in the borough, which was circulated to councillors and the relevant council officers, and was subsequently discussed at an LSP executive meeting.

In 2009, and as a result of the debt report, I was invited to attend and speak at a high level strategy meeting at the council and to put forward suggestions as to how they could respond to the recession. This led to a further meeting with council officers where specific ideas as to how Barnet CAB might assist the council in dealing with the rising levels of debt were further discussed. We are now waiting to hear the response.

Also, as a result of our attempts to get advice on the agenda, we received a year's worth of funding for an adviser to provide advice at two of Barnet Council's customer service points. Part of the council's strategy is to provide a better and more holistic customer service through partnership with other organisations, and we were able to link in effectively with this priority. Although the year's funding is shortly to come to an end, the indications from the council are that they consider it to have been a successful project, and we are hopeful that further funding will be made available.

The events described above arose directly out of our early involvement in the LSP, and even once the Community Steering Group was disbanded it was possible to build on the contacts already made with councillors and council officers. This shows that even if it is not possible to get a seat at the LSP Executive there are other ways in which you can get involved at a high level.

### **Top tips**

1. Look at your local authority's strategic priorities and see how you can link in to these to the benefit of your own organisation and clients. The local authority is keen to be seen to be improving the lives of local residents so demonstrate to them how your organisation can help them achieve this.
2. Invite people to see what you do. Barnet Council has a new Chief Executive and he will shortly be spending a morning at one of our bureaux.
3. Find out who the councillor(s) is that is responsible for advice services funding. Make sure that person (or people) know exactly what you are doing and keep them informed of all relevant developments within your service
4. Get involved in the local advice forum, or set up one up if one doesn't exist. If you are too small to have an individual impact this is a good way to develop a collective voice.
5. Use the local press. Barnet's local press are obsessed by debt, so it hasn't been difficult to get a number of front page stories.
6. Explore other links with the local authority and PCT through which new services can be developed. For example, going into local schools to provide financial capability training or talking to the local Mental Health Partnership Board about funding for welfare benefits advice for people with mental ill-health.
7. Make the argument that the more you help people with debt and welfare benefits issues the more disposable income they will have to spend locally, and there may also be a whole range of other beneficial outcomes which flow from this (i.e. reduced stress and improved health).

## Age Concern and Help the Aged – Creating a local indicator for pensioner poverty

### Belinda Wadsworth, Strategy Adviser, Local & Regional Policy

Although the Later Life Public Service Agreement (PSA17) contained an indicator on pensioner poverty, this indicator was not included in the National Indicator Set. Therefore, any LSP which had highlighted pensioner poverty as an issue in their Sustainable Community Strategy, was unable to include it in their LAA unless they developed their own local indicator.

This was the case in Worcestershire where I was involved on the LSP Poverty Task Group. Working with the other partners on the Group and the LSP Officer, I developed a 'model' local indicator on pensioner poverty (see *Local Pensioner Poverty Indicator for Worcestershire*:

[http://policy.helptheaged.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/FA556E02-D52C-4AEC-A6F8-4AAC903E3283/0/local\\_poverty\\_worcs\\_220508.pdf](http://policy.helptheaged.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/FA556E02-D52C-4AEC-A6F8-4AAC903E3283/0/local_poverty_worcs_220508.pdf) ) which could be adapted and used by any LSP. This 'model' was endorsed by the DWP.

Two members of the Poverty Task Group presented it to the LSP Board and the indicator was accepted and included in the LAA. The same 'model' was also accepted by London Borough of Hillingdon.

#### Top tips

- Think outside the box and be prepared to work hard to get what you want on the agenda.
- When there isn't a national indicator related specifically to a particular area, write a local indicator. Get support from local partners and the LSP team to develop this.
- Make sure you fully understand the timescales and constraints of the LAA process by reading the guidance and policy documents and talking to the LSP Team. Work with them to achieve the best results.

## Section 9

### Steps to influencing and contributing to your LAA

#### Advice in your Local Authority

There is no collective view from Local Authorities about the provision of advice services as it is a discretionary function. Contact your local council to find out their view strategy for advice services:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/AToZOfLocalCouncils/DG\\_A-Z\\_LG](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/AToZOfLocalCouncils/DG_A-Z_LG)

#### Who and what you need to know

It is important to be familiar with the priorities set out in your area's Local Area Agreement as this will help you ascertain how your service can engage and work with your Local Authority. This information can be found at:

<http://www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk/default.aspx>

It is also essential to know who the relevant LAA Lead Officer is for your area and how to contact them:

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8399555>

#### Commissioning officers, relevant departments and staff

Your council commissioning officer will also have information on how the LAA will affect you. Details of your local council can be found at:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/AToZOfLocalCouncils/DG\\_A-Z\\_LG](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/AToZOfLocalCouncils/DG_A-Z_LG)

#### Linking with your local CVS

Your local CVS should be able to advise you on the commissioning process in your area as they will have been involved in the Local Strategic Partnership which formulated the LAA.

A directory can be found at:

<http://www.navca.org.uk/liodir>

## Appendix A

### Glossary of terms

#### Local Area Agreements (LAA)

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are three-year agreements setting out the priorities for a local area as agreed between central government and the main public sector agencies in a local area.

#### National Indicators

Local Area Agreements are measured against a national performance framework made up of a set of 188 National Indicators (reduced in 2009 from 198), which cover areas in which government want to see improvement. The partners in each local area must choose 35 National Indicators by which they will measure success in meeting local priorities.

#### Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) are non-statutory cross-agency partnerships that include all sectors of society; public, private, community and voluntary. The LSP is responsible for developing and ensuring the implementation of the Local Area Agreement. The LSP is the main mechanism for the coordination of delivery of better local services. Guidance<sup>8</sup> requires LSPs to involve “representatives of local persons” including third sector organisations.

#### Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) sets out the long-term vision for an area and should be based on evidence and consultation. The Local Area Agreement, which focuses on a shorter, three year period, is the method through which the SCS is ultimately delivered. All the targets and outcomes in the Local Area Agreement should contribute to delivering the SCS.

#### Multi Area Agreements (MAAs)

Multi Area Agreements (MAAs) exist in situations where it is considered that some outcomes and targets can be more efficiently and effectively delivered by two or more local authorities working across a larger area. MAAs are agreements with central government to deliver specific targets and outcomes on a sub regional basis.

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<sup>8</sup> Creating strong, safe and prosperous communities, DCLG, July 2008. Although this is statutory guidance, the section on the LSP's role and governance does not have statutory force, but the **duty to involve** is mandatory.

## **Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)**

The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which came into effect in April 2009, assesses the performance and prospects for improvement in local areas against Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets and the wider set of national indicators. The CAA essentially looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people on local priorities

## Further reading and resources

The full list of **National Indicators** can be found here:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/finalnationalindicators>

### **The Urban Forum's Handy Guide to LAAs**

<http://www.urbanforum.org.uk/handy-guides/handy-guide-to-laas>

NAVCA's website: <http://www.navca.org.uk/stratwork/localgov/laa/> for the strategic policy work it is undertaking on behalf of members and their publication '**What are local area agreements?**' <http://www.navca.org.uk/publications/laa2/>

There are further resources on the **London Voluntary Service Council** website

<http://www.lvsc.org.uk/Templates/information.asp?NodeId=90623&i1PNID=90619>

### **Advice Service Alliance's briefing on Local Area Agreements**

[http://www.asauk.org.uk/fileLibrary/pdf/LAA\\_briefing001.pdf](http://www.asauk.org.uk/fileLibrary/pdf/LAA_briefing001.pdf)

**(We would like to acknowledge ASA's allowing us draw on their briefing in the development of this document).**

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> *L Harker* **Chance of a Lifetime – The Impact of Bad Housing on Children’s Lives** Shelter (2006). NB this report also references a vast number of research sources on the impact of bad housing (and to some extent poverty and exclusion generally) on children and families, which could be beneficial in presenting the case for advice
- <sup>2</sup> *L Harker*, op Cit, Shelter (2006)
- <sup>3</sup> A number of downloadable **Citizens Advice** publications on the impact of poverty and social exclusion cite evidence of the contribution of advice - [http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/campaigns/policy\\_campaign\\_publications.htm](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/campaigns/policy_campaign_publications.htm)
- <sup>4</sup> *L Harker*, op cit, Shelter (2006)
- <sup>5</sup> **It’s the System, Stupid! Radically Rethinking Advice** AdviceUK (2008) <http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/projects-and-resources/projects/radical/ITSS>
- <sup>6</sup> See the Cabinet Office Briefing Papers for both indicators for further information on how they can be evidenced and will be measured at [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/third\\_sector/assets/ni\\_6\\_briefing\\_note.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/third_sector/assets/ni_6_briefing_note.pdf) and [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/third\\_sector/assets/ni7\\_briefing%20note.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/third_sector/assets/ni7_briefing%20note.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> *L Harker*, op Cit, Shelter (2006)
- <sup>8</sup> *L Harker*, Ibid, Shelter (2006). See also <http://www.cpag.org.uk/> for extensive research evidence on the impact of poverty on children and young people
- <sup>9</sup> See [http://www.csv.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/7B94D859-9403-4B2E-9E96-07238F167034/87032/CSVReportson19\\_FinalPDF2.pdf](http://www.csv.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/7B94D859-9403-4B2E-9E96-07238F167034/87032/CSVReportson19_FinalPDF2.pdf) . Also <http://www.energizeinc.com/art/subj/documents/volunteeringandmentalhealth.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> See <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/> or contact your local Volunteer Centre
- <sup>11</sup> **It’s the System, Stupid! Radically Rethinking Advice** AdviceUK (2008) <http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/projects-and-resources/projects/radical/ITSS>