

Local Area Agreements - What's New?

Local Area Agreements are currently (Nov 07) being renegotiated and refreshed to take into account changes that were announced in the 2006 Local Government White Paper, Stronger and Prosperous Communities.

The new agreements will take effect from June 2008 and are designed to give local authorities and their partners in the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) more freedom to decide how to focus their efforts and resources, therefore making them more effective and accountable.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The new LAAs will be closely tied to the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) which is produced by the LSP and maps out a long term strategy for the local area based on local needs. The LAA will translate the priorities in the SCS into targets, agreed by the LSP and central government represented by the Government Office for London (GoL).

National Performance Indicators

A national set of 198 performance indicators were announced by central government as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 thus replacing the estimated 1200 that existed before. From this new set, LAAs will have to incorporate 35 that best reflect the needs of their local area. Together with 18 statutory education and early years targets these will have to be reported on to central government. In addition local areas can agree additional targets for inclusion in the LAA but these will carry no statutory reporting requirements.

As a counterweight to the greater freedom and flexibility afforded to local areas relevant government departments will have the right to sign off the bit of the LAA that relate to them thus ensuring that certain areas are not neglected.

Funding

From June 2008 LAAs will have a single pot for all funding, with no conditions on how the money is spent. Previously funding was tied to four thematic blocks. These now exist only as a guide to ensure that the full range of national priorities are considered. They have been slightly amended to take into account environmental concerns and are:

- Children and Young People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development and the Environment

Voluntary Sector Involvement

The new agreements no longer have to include a 'Statement of VCS Involvement' however the need to involve local residents and the Third Sector is clearly spelt out in papers such as the Operational Guidance produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Timetable

Month/Year	Action
November 2007	Local Strategic Partnerships agree project timetables and dates of negotiating meetings with Government Offices (GOs).
December 2007	Local authorities and partners and GOs identify working list of proposed priorities and resolve any sticking points.
January 2008	Local Strategic Partnerships and GOs negotiate on the up to 35 indicators from the national indicator set and any local targets, to support their agreed priority outcomes. These are submitted to Central Government by GOs on 25 January 2008.
February 2008	Local authorities and partners consider what targets they may set to be achieved for the selected indicators, in discussion with GOs.
March 2008	Local Strategic Partnerships will submit revised outcomes and proposed targets following negotiations.
April 2008	Financial allocation begin to avoid a 'funding gap' - even though formal sign off doesn't take place until June. Details of this arrangement are currently unclear.
May 2008	Continuing negotiation of outcomes, indicators and targets between local authorities and partners and GOs.
June 2008	Formal submission of LAAs to GOs. GO Regional Directors make recommendations to Central Government. Secretary of State of Communities and Local Government (Hazel Blears) considers all LAAs submitted for her approval, and consults with cabinet colleagues. Approved LAAs and designated targets in place.

Further Information

- **Single Set of National Indicators**

The 198 nationally agreed targets from which 35 must be incorporated into LAAs by each local area

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/doc/517909>

- **Development of the new LAA framework - Operational Guidance 2007**

Part 2 of government guidance on negotiating the new LAAs - Nov 07

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

- **Negotiating New Local Area Agreements**

Part 1 of government guidance on negotiating the new LAAs - Sep 07

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

- **Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper**

The governments consultation document that set out the new requirements for LAAs

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