

# APPENDIX

## EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

2.30 In recent years there has been an increasing recognition, in both central and local government, of the importance of successful partnership working. To tackle our most challenging problems – on health, crime, education, transport, housing and the local environment – we need to marshal the contributions of the public, private and voluntary sectors, and of communities themselves. We will not achieve genuinely citizen-centred services unless service deliverers work well together.

2.31 The Government has done a great deal to encourage such partnerships in policy and service delivery at both national and local levels. We are committed to building on the successful track record of partnerships like the New Commitment to Regeneration and Health Action Zones. In particular, we will complete our drive to establish effective local strategic partnerships (LSPs). These partnerships are the key element in developing integrated approaches to local service delivery, and to tackling policy priorities in a joined-up way. They bring together service deliverers, communities, the voluntary sector and business to identify local priorities and to devise and implement strategies to meet them. They also lead local efforts to close the gap in living standards and opportunities between the most deprived neighbourhoods and other areas.

2.32 We are therefore committed to playing our part to help LSPs succeed. Local authorities and their partners have put in a great deal of effort to establish LSPs. In many areas, significant progress has been made, and examples of exciting and genuinely inclusive approaches to partnership working are beginning to emerge.

2.33 In practice, it is clear that success depends on securing the effective involvement of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Local partners are best placed to decide how to achieve this. So the detailed structure, membership, and geographical coverage of LSPs should be determined locally.

2.34 The Government Office accreditation process now underway in the 88 most deprived areas will provide a rich source of feedback and learning on how LSPs are developing. We will look carefully at the lessons learned from the accreditation process, and draw these out in revised, non-prescriptive guidance to be published next summer. The Government has no intention of imposing a one-size-fits-all approach, or of attempting to micro-manage LSPs through Government guidance or accreditation.

## ***Councils' role on local strategic partnerships***

2.35 Councils have a particular responsibility towards LSPs. Our recent guidance reflects this. We look to councils to be the prime movers in instigating LSPs where they do not already exist and in guiding them through their early stages. Once LSPs have been set up the partnerships themselves should decide who leads. As many as one in four LSPs are chaired by partners other than the local authority. This is in keeping with our non-prescriptive approach. That does not mean that once an LSP has been established a local authority's leadership role has ceased. Irrespective of who chairs an LSP, someone needs to take responsibility and be accountable for ensuring that:-

the membership and methods of consultation and engagement are balanced and inclusive;

difficult decisions are addressed and resolved, not just the easy ones. Those decisions should not simply represent the "lowest common denominator"; and

the partners properly resource and support the LSP.

2.36 In one sense these responsibilities are shared by all partners. But someone needs to step forward and take a lead on these issues if others are failing to do so. This is a key part of every councils' responsibility as the community leader.

## ***Rationalising partnerships***

2.37 Some partnerships are established by statute. Others derive from the requirements of funding or planning activities. Proliferation of these separate partnerships can lead to fragmentation, duplication and inefficiency. LSPs were established, in part, to bring some order to this situation, by placing themselves at the apex of local partnership arrangements and organising existing partnerships on a sensible basis.

2.38 The Government will reduce the number of partnerships it requires. The Regional Co-ordination Unit's review of area-based initiatives will help to reduce the number of partnerships associated with these initiatives. Our proposals to reduce the number of ring-fenced grants and plans will also lead to a reduction in funding and plan-based partnerships.

2.39 Local partners should not have to wait for these deregulatory initiatives to bite. From now on they will have wide discretion as to how and when to rationalise their partnerships. LSPs will be able to slot any statutory partnerships into their emerging structure, for instance as sub-partnerships of the LSP. They will have a free hand to rationalise other partnerships, bringing them together in mergers, nesting them within the LSP and so on. In doing so, partnerships which have a separate legal status will need to maintain a

distinct identity. To ensure that these changes are effective, LSPs must develop, discuss and agree them with the partnerships in question.

2.40 Government Offices should be kept informed of any such developments and may be able to provide advice and assistance (but not exercise a veto).

2.41 For the future, the Government will commit itself to working within existing structures wherever possible, signalling to LSPs when we expect a particular policy initiative to be dealt with collectively and looking to LSPs to decide how best to arrange that locally.

### ***Public sector involvement in LSPs***

2.42 If LSPs are to succeed, all the relevant public sector partners – as well as those in other sectors – need to play their part. The Government doubts whether a statutory duty will improve the participation of public sector bodies although we will keep this under review. Instead, it will use various other means to encourage engagement with LSPs, including:

budgetary mechanisms to ensure that public bodies that wish to contribute financially to LSPs have the ability to do so;

performance management instruments (Public Service Agreements, business plans, service level agreements, management statements and so on);

line management systems to provide staff with incentives to achieve partnership objectives, and support for staff development and capacity building in relation to partnership working;

organisational incentives (e.g. through the wider distribution of local PSA rewards); and

organisational restructuring to provide greater freedom of action to local agencies.

2.43 Levers such as these can have a great effect. In relation to the public bodies accountable to Government, Departments are willing to use any and all of these in order to secure a suitable level of involvement in the work of LSPs as the best way of delivering shared outcomes. During 2002 we will explore in detail with the LGA and other stakeholders how we can best do so, with a view to implementing changes through guidance by April 2003. Taking forward community strategies and other initiatives. To help build social capital and the capacity of communities to engage in local decisions we have established schemes such as the Community Empowerment Fund, Community Chests and the Community Champions Fund. We shall review the support that Government provides to build community capacity in next year's spending review.

## ***Working with business to improve communities***

2.44 The Government wants to see councils and businesses in their areas working together to improve local conditions. As part of this, we will legislate to allow Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to be established in any area where they are backed by the majority of businesses. The BID will be funded by an addition to the business rate. The Government will introduce legislation dealing with such essential issues as the arrangements for the vote on whether to have a BID. Guidance will be provided on how BIDs should work, drawing on existing best practice in establishing and delivering BID-type schemes. We do not wish this to be prescriptive. The Government will encourage the local authority and business organisations to produce this guidance themselves, with and empower their communities. The proposals in Chapter 5 to build the capacity and skills base of officers and members will help here.