



Learning Partnerships: Maximising the Contribution of Learning to Local Regeneration

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Executive Summary

The aim of this study was to identify practice which can support Learning Partnerships (LPs) to develop their regeneration role. It also aims to help the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to clarify how LPs can maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration.

At the time of the fieldwork for this study (March 2003), the brief for Learning Partnerships to 'maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration' was less than a year old. The study was commissioned as part of the 'transition' arrangements following the 2001-02 DfES Review of Learning Partnerships, the outcomes of which included the new core regeneration role and the transfer of funding for LPs from the DfES to the LSC.

Learning and Regeneration

A wide range of learning activity can contribute to regeneration. Because regeneration depends on long-term, structural responses, the research focused particularly on how LPs are working to embed learning into the agendas, priorities, planning and funding of key regeneration agencies. Consequently, we investigated:

- how effectively LPs were "positioning" themselves with relation to the existing regeneration agencies at local level
- what action the LPs have been able to take which contributes to the regeneration agenda.

The Challenge for Learning Partnerships

There are enormous challenges for LPs in helping to support and knit together the potential contribution of local partners to regeneration whilst simultaneously addressing the complex environment around regeneration policy and initiatives. Learning and regeneration activity needs to be set in the context of the national learning and development strategy for neighbourhood renewal. It needs to be developed in partnership with the responsibilities and action of a range of other key sub-regional and regional bodies that have also been given specific responsibilities in this area. These include in particular Local Authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and the LSC, along with the voluntary and community sectors, providers and a range of regional agencies.

Impact

There is strong evidence to show that all of the sampled LPs are making active moves towards locating themselves effectively within the local political landscape and linking up with regeneration agencies. All appear to have understood the importance of the new remit: that this requires a new set of relationships and are trying to align with regeneration structures and agencies.

Inhibiting factors

Learning Partnerships differ in size and complexity. Some match LSC areas or LEAs, others match to LSP areas. Relationships between LPs and LSCs and LEAs vary considerably. The responses to the interviews suggest that the smaller Unitary based

LPs make better, more natural relationships with their single LSPs and with regeneration issues. Making these relationships is a harder task where a large Shire based LP has to contend with a number of LSPs, some funded and some not. This can be successfully overcome by creating sub-structures which link closely to the LSPs.

There are a number of factors which affect the ability of a LP to develop and function. These will have affected its success in establishing collaborative approaches and will similarly affect its ability to engage with the regeneration agenda. Some of these factors are identified in the report.

Support Mechanisms

LPs need, and should have, support to develop their regeneration remit. The newly announced development programme for LP Managers is welcome. In addition, work needs to be done on how LPs can demonstrate they are effectively meeting their collaboration and regeneration remit from government as well as helping LLSCs to achieve their strategic objectives. This needs an agreed and effective definition of the LP's role, including its regeneration remit, with clearer understanding of the minimum activities and services which the LP could be expected to deliver.

These minimum expectations need to draw together the roles given LPs by government, the needs of the LSC and the local needs which LPs have tried to meet. The reality of LPs as voluntary providers, and the nature of their activity as mainly about process and facilitation rather than provision, needs to inform issues of performance.

Recommendations

We recommend that LPs aim to develop their work in as close an association as possible with LSPs and other regeneration agencies. Maximum integration of priorities, strategies and processes is to be encouraged, including being part of LSP Performance Management arrangements.

This is not always possible and, consequently, we recommend looking seriously at whether the accreditation and performance management processes for funded LSPs developed by the NRU could be adapted for LPs.

We also recommend the drawing up of a set of statements about activity and objectives that could reasonably be expected of LPs, particularly in relation to their regeneration activity. These, in effect, would constitute a minimum level of performance to cover the full range of LP activity. The outcomes of the LSC review of its relationships with LPs may help to determine how much, if at all, these statements should be developed at other than a local level. These statements, and the priorities, objectives and actions of LPs that they give rise to, should range across four dimensions:

- LPs' internal partnership arrangements and conduct;
- how they raise aspirations and demand;
- how they encourage, facilitate and support others to deliver effective learning for regeneration; and
- how they influence regeneration agencies and partnerships to ensure that learning is central to regeneration policy, planning, priorities and funding.

1.0 The role for Learning Partnerships in local regeneration

1.1 Learning Partnerships' regeneration brief

The review of Learning Partnerships in 2002-03 identified two core roles for Learning Partnerships: continuing to promote provider collaboration and a new role of maximising the contribution of learning to local regeneration. By the autumn of 2002, the DfES was encouraging Learning Partnerships "to engage with and support regeneration and neighbourhood renewal partnerships and to work closely together to establish the specific needs of deprived communities and to involve local people in the solutions", noting that Learning Partnerships "are well placed to form the 'learning arm' or sub group of the LSP...¹ A toolkit on the Learning Partnerships' website has subsequently offered them more advice on how their 'regeneration' role can be developed.

1.2 The contribution of learning to local regeneration

Learning contributes to neighbourhood renewal or regeneration in a range of ways. The context and content of the learning covers both informal activity and formal learning programmes. The spectrum² may include:

- community education which supports learning in informal community settings or community social action;
- basic skills development or widening participation activity aimed at drawing residents into learning, both of which are intended to enhance and widen future choices in learning, employment, community engagement or family life;
- progression opportunities to build on widening participation or basic skills activity;
- 'family learning' or other activity that adults engage in primarily to support children and young people's achievement;
- learning designed to increase economic regeneration by increasing residents' employability or higher level skills development;
- strengthening local businesses through in-house workforce development or neighbourhood provision aimed at local workers;
- specific programmes of neighbourhood renewal or regeneration skills, perhaps drawing on the schema identified in 'The Learning Curve', aimed at residents, local activists or local practitioners/ professionals.³

Many learning activities will in practice cover more than one of these elements and, in areas of significant disadvantage, it is arguable that the whole spectrum should be in place. Both individual and community development approaches are needed. Programmes may be for young people or adult residents, many of whom will have been failed by the education system. They may be aimed at groups, such as black and minority ethnic communities or disabled people, who experience particular structural inequality and disadvantage. On the other hand, they may be targeted at voluntary and community organisations or professionals engaged in neighbourhood renewal or broader regeneration activity.

¹ Paper LPTSGO4 on 'Learning Partnerships Contribution to Regeneration', posted on the Learning Partnerships website in autumn 2002

² The LSDA will be describing a continuum of learning linked to regeneration in a forthcoming publication

³ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The learning curve : developing skills and knowledge for neighbourhood renewal. Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. 2003

Learning for residents that is aimed at enhancing regeneration and neighbourhood renewal goes beyond the skills and knowledge development connected directly to the overt content of the curriculum. The Policy Action Team on Skills report⁴ highlights management and outreach issues, noting the importance of: learning that genuinely engages local people's interests; developing local capacity; and neighbourhood learning centres. Approaches to relationships around learning are also important. Engaging and supporting those whom the system has failed is built on processes of active listening and dialogue. Such learning can and should seek outcomes that include overcoming isolation, building confidence and self-esteem and providing "some of the glue that connects 'issues' to 'ideas', and 'understanding' to 'practical action'. It can repair bridges between people in divided communities and help to repair damaged solidarities"⁵. Effective approaches model and genuinely increase local control and generate visions of alternatives by using methods that are participative, interactive, encourage critical thinking/debate and promote cultures of activism.

In addition, to facilitate the enormous changes required to address the multiple and relative deprivation of the country's most disadvantaged areas and to improve the quality of public services available to all, public sector bodies need to become learning organisations: organisations which are open to change, reflect on their own experience and that of others, work across professional silos, and promote and sustain partnership, problem-solving approaches to the needs and requirements of communities. As identified in both the report of Policy Action Team 16 Report⁶ and the 'Learning Curve', this requires substantial changes in how public sector professionals deploy their existing skills and learn new ones. Staff in such organisations need access to skills and knowledge development set within approaches that develop visions of alternatives and confidence that they can play an important role in creating change.

The development and delivery of learning activity for residents, local businesses or staff in public sector organisations is the job of individual practitioners and organisations, many of whom may be Learning Partnership members. But there are four significant applications for Learning Partnerships. Developing these four dimensions will help them to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration.

1. Internal partnership arrangements: how the Partnership itself conducts its business and promotes positive partnership working to provide better and more 'joined-up' services (i.e. modelling the behaviours and attitudes inherent in successful approaches to regeneration).
2. Developing demand for learning in regeneration areas: how the Partnership leads or supports initiatives to promote learning, raise aspirations and increase demand for learning among individuals, communities and local businesses in areas of significant disadvantage.
3. Facilitating and supporting the delivery of learning for regeneration: how the Partnership supports its members, and other organisations and partnerships engaged in delivering or facilitating learning, to understand, embrace and contribute to the regeneration agenda so that they develop and deliver learning activity which responds effectively to local needs and regeneration issues.

⁴ Policy Action Team on Skills. Final Report. DfEE. 1999.

⁵ Jane Thompson. Community Education and Neighbourhood Renewal. NIACE. 2002.

⁶ Social Exclusion Unit. Report of Policy Action Team 16 : learning lessons. The Stationary Office, 2000, London

4. Influencing regeneration policy and agencies: how the Partnership engages with key regeneration agencies and partnerships to ensure that learning is structurally and centrally embedded into regeneration policy, planning, priorities and funding.

Learning Partnerships can and do take practical action to develop these four dimensions and, in doing so, contribute to fulfilling their regeneration remit. Individual activities may well contribute to more than one of the dimensions and examples of practical action include:

- ensuring their own partners understand the full range of activity and ways in which learning can contribute to local regeneration including identifying and disseminating examples of successful practice, as well as disseminating information and encouraging more debate and staff development on what works and how to do it;
- ensuring that the perspectives, experiences and aspirations of learners, other residents and professionals in regeneration areas are heard by providers, the LLSC and other relevant agencies;
- facilitating and supporting the connections between interested partners and other organisations or agencies;
- leading or supporting co-ordinated, strategic action around campaigns to raise demand for learning such as Bite Size, Adult Learners' Week, Basic Skills;
- commissioning or supporting needs analyses identifying local learning needs particularly related to regeneration;
- mapping learning provision and activity in key areas to ensure the full spectrum of learning for neighbourhood renewal and regeneration is in place and working effectively;
- encouraging collaborative activity where there are gaps;
- accessing, co-ordinating or managing funding to fill gaps and generate additional learning activity that meets local needs and supports regeneration;
- supporting capacity building within key local partners – e.g. voluntary and community organisations – that can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and regeneration;
- managing regeneration funding;
- building the structural links that will ensure that effective learning for neighbourhood renewal and regeneration becomes and remains central to the concerns, strategies and plans of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and other local regeneration agencies. Learning Partnerships create these in a range of ways – e.g. by becoming an effective 'learning arm' of the LSP and/or other regeneration-focused partnerships, developing skills and knowledge plans for LSPs and ensuring the inclusion of learning related objectives in Community Plans and Strategies, working with NDCs or Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders etc.

NIACE's contacts with Learning Partnerships suggest their work includes a wide range of such activity.

1.3 The 'learning and regeneration' context

Learning Partnerships face big challenges in helping to support and knit together the potential contribution of local partners to regeneration whilst simultaneously addressing the complex environment around regeneration policy and initiatives. 'Maximising the contribution of learning to local regeneration' entails them operating in a complex field. Their activity around learning and regeneration needs to be set in the context of the national learning and development strategy for neighbourhood renewal and be developed in partnership with, and reference to, responsibilities and action of a range of

other key sub-regional and regional bodies that have also been given specific responsibilities in this area by government, in particular Local Authorities, LSPs and the Learning and Skills Council.

Local Authorities: They are the leading players in regeneration. The scope of their engagement goes far beyond the learning and skills remit and involves matters relating to environments, housing, economic development and a host of other services. They have community leadership and "well being" powers, along with their responsibility for leadership of Local Strategic Partnerships. Ideally, they will be trying to transform their approaches in ways suggested by 'the Learning Curve'. In addition, those Local Authorities that are LEAs are likely to be addressing regeneration and neighbourhood renewal objectives as part of their adult education activity and, in fact, LSC Guidance on Adult Learning Plans specifically asks LEAs to provide information on activity and learner volume targets for learning linked to neighbourhood renewal and citizenship.

LSPs: There is a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS) requirement for each LSP in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) funding to produce a Local Action on Learning plan, identifying the priorities for learning to deliver neighbourhood renewal. Many LSPs not in receipt of NR funding will also be developing priorities around learning as part of their Community Plan or Strategy.

LSC: The LSC's role in local regeneration has been underlined in its grant letters and local LSCs have identified regeneration priorities in their Strategic Plans. Capacity for LLSCs to support regeneration has been enhanced through the 'Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities' fund though many local Councils will also be using mainstream funding to address regeneration priorities. Consideration of where Learning Partnerships might make the greatest contribution in the future, and a need to clarify their role in relation to the overarching responsibilities of local LSCs, influenced the government's decision in the 2002-03 Review to change Learning Partnerships' core roles and funding routes. Learning Partnerships need to locate their own regeneration activity in relation to the LSC's funding brief and its responsibilities for supporting regeneration. However, how Learning Partnerships maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration may overlap with, but not be identical to, LLSC priorities. For example, Partnerships may have a 'cradle to grave' focus rather than being tied to the age ranges and types of learning for which the LSC is responsible.

Learning Partnerships will also want to develop their regeneration role with a range of other key sub-regional sectors and partners, such as the voluntary sector and local providers, who may well be members of the Partnership. In addition, LPs will need to be mindful of regional developments such as the planned Centres for Excellence in Regeneration and consider the implications of regional regeneration strategies/ neighbourhood renewal plans drawn up by RDAs, Government Offices and other partners and the initiative on 'learning communities' announced in the Skills Strategy⁷. As the regional agenda develops across England, it is likely that Regional Assemblies will also play increasingly significant roles in regeneration, and possibly learning, strategies and initiatives.

⁷ 21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential. The Stationery Office. 2003

2.0 Background and approaches to this study

2.1 Context for this study

One outcome of the 2002-03 Review of Learning Partnerships was that, from April 2003, responsibility for funding Learning Partnerships passed from the DfES to the LSC. Both the DfES and LSC, as well as Learning Partnerships and others, were involved in considerable 'transition' activity.

In February 2003, as part of that handover, the DfES commissioned two parallel studies to identify and analyse current 'collaboration' and 'regeneration' practice by Learning Partnerships. The DfES's intention was that this particular study should identify practice which would support Learning Partnerships to develop their regeneration role but also to help the LSC (and DfES) set a framework clarifying expectations for Learning Partnerships to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration. The study was to do this through fieldwork that would represent a snapshot of practice in March 2003.

After the study was commissioned, the LSC announced its intention to conduct a review of Learning Partnership activity. The review process will throw further light on Learning Partnerships' regeneration activity and its impact.

2.1 Brief for the research

The DfES asked NIACE to:

1. Investigate and analyse what Learning Partnerships are doing/intend to do to fulfil their regeneration remit.
2. Offer advice on how LPs can demonstrate that they are "the learning arm of the Local Strategic Partnership" recognising that this is likely to be a developmental process for both partnerships.
3. Identify and describe various models, in part related to the status and readiness of the associated LSP.
4. Help the Learning and Skills Council and DfES set a framework which will clarify expectations for learning partnerships to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration.

2.2 Our approach

We were aware that it would be difficult to extract the regeneration agenda from the general activity of the LPs. It is difficult to interpret what "maximising the involvement of learning in local regeneration" or what "becoming the learning arm of the LSP" means in practice. NIACE's informal contacts with the field suggested that some LPs would argue that they were engaged in regeneration-related activity before that role was formally given to LPs - i.e. that it is not a separate and new activity. LPs have always been multi-purpose organisations founded in establishing collaborative alliances with other agencies. So, some LPs would have already been forming relationships with local regeneration agencies before the change to the remit. Some LPs would already have been carrying out activity that very specifically supported some of those agencies' objectives or used their resources. Others, although not directly related in those ways, would argue that they have been involved in regeneration activity since their inception in

the sense that they have carried out work around social inclusion, widening participation and basic skills, seeing this as activity which supports regeneration and in line with the general statements made from Kennedy onwards that social inclusion, lifelong learning and economic regeneration are all key aspects of the same process. This was an interpretation stated clearly by David Blunkett in “The Learning Age”.⁸

The difficulty of isolating LPs’ regeneration-related activity from their other work led us to take a particularly focused approach. Section 1.2 above suggests it is useful to think about LPs’ work in ‘maximising the contribution of learning to local regeneration’ along four dimensions:

- their internal partnership arrangements and conduct;
- how they raise aspirations and demand for learning in regeneration areas;
- how they encourage, facilitate and support others to deliver effective learning for regeneration;
- how they influence regeneration agencies and partnerships to ensure that learning is central to regeneration policy, planning, priorities and funding.

This study touches on all of them, though the second and third dimensions are inevitably local and encompass activity in which many LPs have been engaging from their inception. The parallel study on LPs’ collaboration practice will also shed useful light on the first dimension⁹.

We have focused particularly on the fourth dimension because regeneration depends on long-term, structural responses. We take it that the Government is seriously interested in Learning Partnerships:

- aligning themselves specifically with Regeneration Agencies, and particularly with LSPs, in order to provide a coherent structure;
- being pro-active in undertaking combined activity which applies learning to the regeneration agenda as defined by those agencies.¹⁰

We therefore decided to focus closely on the intersection of LPs with those agencies tasked to stimulate regeneration activity (see Section 1.3 above) and consider two major aspects of the work:

- Firstly: how effectively LPS were “positioning” themselves with relation to the existing regeneration agencies at local level. Our assumption was that, if LPs are to take on a long- term role working alongside and in close working relationships with regeneration agencies, they need to be positioned in such a way that they are an ongoing and important part of the local debate over issues and actions. This requires LPs to locate themselves effectively within the local political landscape. In attempting to capture and describe this, we knew that there was likely to be difficulty in disentangling the regeneration issues from the collaboration function. Successful positioning is arguably another facet of the credibility of the LP as a functioning and effective part of the local environment. It probably means that Partnerships already successful and effective in their

⁸ Secretary of State for Education and Employment. The learning age : a renaissance for a new Britain. Green Paper. 1998.

⁹ Helen English Associates. Collaboration: Learning Partnerships and Stakeholders. A Guide. DfES. 2003

¹⁰ Both James Turner (DfES) and Tony Belmaga (LSC) confirmed at the National Conference of Learning Partnerships in March 2003 that LPs and LSPs have a strong mutual interest in regeneration and need to work closely together. They suggested that they will already have forged close working relationships in many areas and that the DfES and LSC would expect this to continue.

pursuing their original remit will have a head start when it comes to following the regeneration agenda.

- Secondly: what action the LPs have been able to take which contributes to the regeneration agenda. We deliberately interpreted this narrowly and looked for activity which LPs could identify as work carried out jointly with or funded and supported by organisations or partnerships with a remit for regeneration such as LSPs. We hoped that it might be possible to distinguish positioning efforts and activity against a wide range of local regeneration agencies including funded and unfunded LSPs, sub regional Regional Development Agency partnerships, Single Regeneration Budget partnerships, New Deal for Communities and other local arrangements.

In addition to trying to identify the alignment issues and the levels of activity taking place we tried to look at what supported or hindered these activities.

We were unsure about the significance of formal recognition as “the learning arm of the LSP”. Our assumption was that formal recognition as the “learning arm” does not necessarily imply that specific activity is taking place and, conversely, that LPs may be able to “position” themselves effectively and carry out activity without formal recognition and similarly. For example, in the local political situation, it may be better to earn the position of “learning arm” by carrying out the role and by working effectively rather than by insisting on formal recognition.

18 Learning Partnerships were interviewed for this study in March 2003 and other LPs’ regeneration activity was also considered. The findings were reported and tested out in June 2003 at an ‘expert seminar’ of representatives from the DfES, NRU, LSC, Learning Partnerships and consultants supporting LPs.

Information on the Learning Partnerships contributing to the Study is found in Annex 1 and further information on the methodology can be found in Annex 2. The next section provides a summary of the findings of the research.

3.0 Summary of findings and analysis

Learning Partnerships, based on the evidence of this study, are making effective links to regeneration agencies and, using that link, are making an effective contribution to regeneration activity. It is clear that the opportunity exists, if policy levers were synchronised and some continuity of existence assured, for an even more significant contribution to be made in the future.

3.1 Positioning and alignment of Learning Partnerships with regeneration agencies

There is strong evidence to show that all of our sample of LPs are making active moves towards locating themselves effectively within the local political landscape and linking up with regeneration agencies. All appear to have understood the importance of the new remit, understood that this requires a new set of relationships and to be trying to align with regeneration structures and agencies. A considerable number of Learning Partnerships – 80% of our sample - are already recognised effectively as the lead agency on learning of at least some LSPs in their area. 50% of the sample are formally recognised as the “learning arm” of at least some of the LSPs in their area. All are making strategic moves to establish that position although this is difficult in some areas. There are also some examples of strong alignment with RDA sub regional economic partnerships as well. Discussion with York Consulting Ltd revealed further supporting evidence¹¹. Of the thirteen LPs indicated in their final report as being active on regeneration issues, *all* were engaged in ‘first stage activity’ – aligning themselves with LSPs, some were engaged in ‘second stage activity’ – setting up local community forums to link with LSPs, and there were 1 or 2 examples of ‘third stage activity’ – specific projects with LSP funding and led by the LP.

It is important to realise that, although the ‘best’ Partnerships would have been already looking in this direction as a place to make an impact, the remit which directs Partnerships towards regeneration in such a specific way had been in place for less than a year at the time of the fieldwork for this study.

A wide range of Partners is being involved by the Learning Partnerships in developing the regeneration remit. Most Partnerships use a mixture of cross representation both formal and informal and mutually supportive structures in order to create the links and positioning within the local environment. The strength of cross representation is highlighted especially in the small LA led situations. There is great value in networking by managers and Board members. The question arises: Is there a difference between formal links and recognition and those informal arrangements where Partners just happen to be on a series of groups? The effect may be the same in the short term but informal relationships are at risk as personnel change over time.

The responses to the interviews suggest that the smaller Unitary based LPs make better more natural relationships with their single LSPs and with regeneration issues. Making these relationships is a harder task where a large Shire based LP has to contend with a number of LSPs, some funded and some not. This situation can be successfully overcome by creating sub-structures which link closely to the LSPs although this raises further issues around capacity, communications and resources. Not least among the communication issues is the need for the LLSC and the LP to agree a ‘division of labour’ in relation to LSP activity.

¹¹ Discussion with Georgina Cowan, York Consulting Ltd., 30 April, 2003

Strategic Area Review was mentioned infrequently by the Partnerships involved in the research. This process will be a way to draw together local issues. There are strong arguments for carrying out StAR to match LSP areas as this would help to lock activity together and join up strategies at local level. The collaborative solutions required by StARs could also draw on the support of LPs.

There are a number of factors which hinder the development of the “positioning” work on regeneration:

- At a policy level there is the problem of the lack of reciprocity. There is no strong policy clout behind the engagement of LPs in regeneration and this means that the LP always has to earn its place with LSPs and SSPs (Strategic Sub-regional Partnerships). Success in this depends on many factors including particularly the strength of Chair/Manager. There has been some encouragement from GOs to LSPs to link with Learning Partnerships but it was clearly stated at the recent National Learning Partnerships Conference that it is **not the policy** of the NRU that LPs should become the Learning arms of LSPs although they would encourage it. It appears that more guidance may be forthcoming from NRU.

Quotes from Partnerships:

- “LSPs have not been asked if they want it or how well they relate to LPs. It’s been put into our policy framework but not theirs”
- “LPs are not part of regeneration agencies development plans or central policy. It is LP co-ordinators who are constantly networking to bring them into their activities”

The current ODPM longitudinal study of LSPs has not included any investigation into LSPs’ work and relationships with LPs. Adding questions to the next tranche would provide valuable information but might also be a way of alerting LSPs to the potential contribution of LPs.

The fact that so many LPs have become effectively involved and active shows the strength of the LP concept. They may be working without the support of potentially useful policy levers but many are still successful.

- There is also a lack of certainty with regard to the relationship with LLSCs. LPs are busily making relationships with local LSCs without there being any steer centrally to those local LSCs to encourage them to see LPs as a long term feature of the learning landscape and the “first choice” vehicle for local consultation and collaborative initiatives. This lack of formal recognition denies the LPs authority which could make them more effective.
- The position and remit of learning partnerships has been subject to almost constant review and change since their creation. The kind of work which they are being asked to carry out, particularly on the regeneration agenda, requires continuity and credibility over an extended period. The feeling of insecurity for LP staff and Partners and the perception of impermanence by potential collaborating agencies makes planning and consistency difficult and makes serious collaboration an unattractive proposition for other agencies.
- There is evidence from interviews that those LSPs with funds may be less willing to work with LPs than those without. This may be a timing issue, i.e. the LP may not have been ready to be involved at the right time, but is also likely to reflect views about “ownership” of the funds.

- Problems arise over the divide between education and skills in the minds of economic development agencies and the pressure to bid against tight timetables prevents or hinders collaboration.
- One manager emphasised the need for guidance about how regeneration activity, with its often soft outcomes, can be funded in non-NRF areas given the tight criteria for funding.
- In some instances where Community Plans have been developed without the involvement of Learning Partnerships, and where a need for learning has not been recognised explicitly within the Plan, it can be difficult for the LP to make effective links.
- Effective representation on LSPs needs to be both high level and on-going. In counties where there are several LSPs this can present severe challenges, to both Learning Partnerships and to LLSCs, in terms of the demands on the time of senior staff.
- LPs talk about the limited resources – the core funding has been static with no allowance for inflation since 2000. Resources can provide what one LP called “seduction” money to draw agencies into collaboration.

There are few examples of any systematic testing of the success in preparing to work with regeneration agencies. Those put forward may focus more on provider effectiveness than on partnership working. There may be a need for a self- assessment tool to help LPs assess their position. The Performance Management Framework being developed by NRU for LSPs may provide a model – see section 4 below.

3.2 Regeneration activity being carried out by Learning Partnerships

Again, within our very specific definition of activity in regeneration, we are seeing high levels of linked activity with LPs working alongside regeneration agencies and particularly LSPs. It is clear from the examples that the actual contribution to regeneration in the wider sense is very considerable. In specific terms 11 of the 18 LPs interviewed were working closely with LSPs on Skills and Knowledge plans and activity, Action on Learning Plans and LSP led or funded projects. 5 were involved with continuing SRB activity and 1 specifically mentioned activity with New Deal for Communities.

Eleven of the LPs interviewed felt they were trying to make strategic responses. Some accepted that at this stage they could only carry out work with a link to regeneration rather than influencing strategy but wished to aspire to this. It is not clear how LPs are interpreting “strategic” and whether the understanding is consistent. They may be referring to a desire to plan strategically or they may be referring to their vision which stretches widely across the area and agencies.

Other Partnerships felt that a voluntary partnership may not be able to do strategic planning. It is perhaps more the case that the LP lacks authority as explained above. LSPs also have a voluntary aspect but they do have authority through the mechanisms which established them.

The barriers to developing activity are similar to those which restrict LPs ability to position themselves effectively – in summary:

- policy uncertainties;

- limits to LPs' core capacity and resources;
- the different pace and approach of different LSPs;
- problems arising from the differing requirements of multiple funding streams accessed by LPs.

There are high levels of activity despite these limiting factors.

3.3 Relationships with the LSC

There is a range of practice by LLSCs in the ways in which they engage with LPs on regeneration issues. In some cases LPs have stated in the interviews that this results from the variable quality or knowledge of LLSC staff. The interviews did not reflect a consistent relationship between LLSCs and LPs on regeneration issues across the country or over time. Some have a very strong and integrated approach – sharing support of local groupings or paying for part-time local co-ordinators. Others take little active part in making links to LPs on this issue. The lack of clarity and consistency across LLSCs on where they stand on regeneration issues, and the LSC contribution to regeneration, does not make it easier for the distinctive LP contribution to be developed and acknowledged or for LLSCs and LPs to articulate and agree divisions of labour.

There is a difficulty in aligning the LP emphasis on the process of collaboration with the LLSC target and output driven approach. There is a difficulty in assessing the added value from collaborative working. This is a general issue relating to all LP activity and will be an important issue as LLSCs and LPs develop agreements for their core funding.

The interviews suggest that, where the LP and the LLSC are co-terminous, effective relationships with the LLSC tend to be easier than where there are a number of LPs within the LLSC area. This mirrors the position of more straightforward LSP-LP relationships where LP boundaries are co-terminous with unitary Local Authorities.

3.4 Relationships with LEAs

LPs gave more mixed response than would be expected considering that 11 of our sample are hosted by Local Authorities. There are a number of strong examples where the different parts of the Local Authority work effectively with the learning partnership. In some cases it has proved difficult to establish where the lead on learning matters should come from.

3.5 Issues which support Learning Partnership development generally

There are a number of issues which support LP development generally and which therefore contribute to their ability to carry out the regeneration remit.

- There are some signs that having an Operational Group with overarching responsibility below Board level adds some energy and shape to activity.
- Continuity of arrangements and previous history are important in strengthening relationships.
- Success in positioning the LP in the local environment generally supports the work on regeneration.

- The work of the Manager, Chair and the status given to the LP by other Partners all help to create the pre-requisites for successful work on regeneration.
- Avoiding conflicts is important to maintain a voluntary collaboration. 14-19 strategy has been a problem in some places because it has created conflicts.

3.6 Host/independence/legal entity

Since most LPs are not legal entities they have to operate through a financial host. There can be issues with continuing with that kind of arrangement once serious amounts of money flow through LPs. Some LPs are considering financial independence and in at least one case we have found an LP forming a delivery company. This appears not to have created any concerns amongst existing providers.

3.7 Voluntary Sector

A number of LPs have explained that they find it hard to engage with the voluntary and community sector, sometimes because there is no overarching body in existence. Some LPs have supported the development of such a grouping.

The widespread recognition of the importance of the voluntary and community sectors to neighbourhood renewal is reflected in the creation of the Community Chests programme and the Community Empowerment Fund, as well as the current 'future-builders' consultation.

The voluntary sectors' roles and contributions in developing local learning, and in service delivery more generally, have been recognised in a wide range of other government initiatives and reports. Government has committed itself to supporting the role of the voluntary sector by:

- helping organisations play a bigger role in revitalising communities and empowering citizens;
- helping the sector become more effective and efficient;
- enabling the sector to become a more active partner in shaping policy and delivery.

The sectors' potential role in the learning-regeneration nexus has also been underlined through the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities funding which is intended, in part, to develop their capacity to deliver learning in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

In its workshop at the National Learning Partnership Conference, West Sussex Learning Partnership described how it had massively increased voluntary sector involvement by giving funding to existing health-voluntary sector structures to take on a learning remit, including engaging voluntary organisations to go to liaison meetings and write up information appropriately for voluntary sector communication channels. In addition to providing some funding for local networks, the Learning Partnership is the intermediary body for 'Global Grants' in West Sussex. It invited VCOs to bid for project funding against broad objectives in the county's Learning Plan and, in many instances, found match for projects. It has brokered relationships with other partners to mainstream the activity and also committed itself to brokering relationships to obtain project funding in instances when it was not able to fund via Global Grants.

All of this underscores the need for Learning Partnerships to find ways of really engaging the voluntary sector in linking regeneration and learning and supporting capacity building to make this possible where that is necessary.

3.8 Understanding

There is clearly a need for training at all levels in the skills and attitudes needed for neighbourhood regeneration. This was recognised in “the Learning Curve” and LPs are able to play a key role in delivering Action on Learning Plans.

3.9 Wider issues

There is considerable pressure to produce collaborative solutions to policy issues in the learning field. LSC Widening Participation strategy, 14-19 developments, Success for All, and Basic Skills developments are all examples of this. At the same time Area Inspection and Strategic Area Review will require collaborative responses. One problem with the development of Learning Partnerships and the development of collaborative solutions is that no particular Government Department owns collaboration – they all focus on their specific agendas. Yet the ability to develop and foster genuine collaboration is a pre-condition for LPs acting as cultural change agents, encouraging professionals and providing institutions to work across the boundaries and out of the silos, and for LPs being able to challenge what is being offered as learning by their members and whether current offers will really maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration.

In some ways GOs were well placed to support this activity across the boundaries of Departments. Now that the responsibility for funding LPs has fallen to the LSC, there are strong arguments that the LSC should be ‘institutionally generous’ and accept that as well as supporting LSC objectives, LPs need also to support other, wider, objectives.

In the light of increasing dependence on collaborative solutions the great gap is the lack of any mechanism to incentivise collaboration. In fact the funding systems are all still set up to support autonomous and potentially competitive activity. LPs are trying to paste a collaborative wallpaper on a structure which is still divided and has the potential to fragment.

With regard to funding for Learning Partnerships, and what they should be funded to do, there are some analogies with the long-standing debate between the government and the voluntary and community sector about the need for core funding in addition to specific payment for service delivery. Core funding is seen as necessary to establish and maintain infrastructure to enable voluntary and community organisations, and the sector as a whole, to fulfil what government sees as its unique contributions and allow them to engage strategically in building local solutions. The parallel with issues faced by Learning Partnerships is obvious.

A more detailed report on the findings of the research can be found in Annex 3. In each section of the “findings” in Annex 3, there is an introductory text and, in some cases, other evidence from conference reports. This is followed by evidence boxes which record illustrative comments from the Learning Partnerships interviewed for the research. These comments not only provide the evidence for the statements made in this of the report but also illustrate the diversity of experience which is a characteristic of the Learning Partnerships.

4.0 Framework for assessment

4.1 The need for a framework

The DfES also asked NIACE to:

- Offer advice on how LPs can demonstrate that they are “the learning arm of the local LSP” recognising that this is likely to be a developmental process for both partnerships.
- Help the LSC and DfES set a framework which will clarify expectations for learning partnerships to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration

Feedback on the experience of LPs in this study suggests that formal recognition as ‘the learning arm’ does not, in itself, solve the question of how LPs understand and deliver on the ‘regeneration’ component of their core role. To the extent that it signals a close and effective working relationship with the LSP, it is clearly a useful development though LPs are urged to negotiate precisely what it means to be the ‘learning arm’ with the LSP itself. LPs can play an invaluable role in supporting their own partners to recognise and respond effectively to regeneration issues, in offering perspectives informed by their expertise about learning to other LSP partners and in ensuring that the potential of learning to support regeneration across the piece is a central part of the thinking of the LSP as a whole. However, it is not likely to be helpful for the ‘learning arm’ role to be interpreted as taking on the responsibility of the LSP as a whole to think about, and plan, learning in a way that encourages the LSP to abdicate its responsibilities.

We have suggested the need for Local LSCs to recognise that the value and activity of LPs stretches more widely than a narrow definition of the strategic objectives of the LSC and that this is particularly necessary if Partnerships are to be able to fulfil the regeneration remit placed upon them by government. However, LLSCs will wish to see that LPs are supporting them in their efforts to achieve their strategic objectives and, as funders, to be confident that LPs can show that they are effective across any wider role. To be able to carry out that kind of assessment it will be necessary to develop, for the regeneration remit, an effective definition of the LP’s role and this will need to be mirrored in other areas of activity so that there is some clearer understanding of the minimum activities and services which the LPs could be expected to deliver. These minimum expectations need to draw together the roles given LPs by government, the needs of the LSC nationally and the local needs which LPs have tried to meet. This will need to be linked to targets and outcomes which relate properly to the nature of the LP’s activity which is mainly about process and facilitation rather than provision.

A more comprehensive survey of LPs across the country aimed at assessing the effectiveness of LPs in their regeneration role would probably identify, that, as a result of a number of factors, there is not a consistent level of performance. It was not surprising that the Review of 2002/3 and York Consulting found a wide variation in quality of practice. LPs were established with a far ranging remit in 1999 but, although they were heavily evaluated, no effort was made to provide developmental support or staff training for those engaged with the task of carrying the work forward. There is a strong argument that any response to disparities in performance should first look at the developmental activity needed to raise the performance of all LPs to an agreed level rather than discarding the LP approach. This may require support and a staff development programme. The DfES has recently announced that a programme, jointly funded and supported by the NRU, will be launched shortly. This is welcome. The skills for collaborative working, including around regeneration objectives, need an investment in

their development - just as there was considerable investment in developing the skills for competition in the 1990s.

This report is being completed at a time when, because of the LSC's review of its relationships with Learning Partnerships, the discussion of appropriate ways of assessing added value and measuring LP performance is to the fore. This issue will be considered as part of the review process and consulted upon.

Framework options

4.2 LSC Development Plan

One obvious option is to examine the potential for adapting the LSC three year Development Planning process to devise a model appropriate for LPs – i.e. for voluntary partnerships that do not engage in service delivery and have a two-dimensional, if somewhat abstract, core role given by government. This option is attractive because it would support Local LSCs in assembling and making visible the suite of local organisations which contribute to their objectives. Three year planning and funding would also go a long way towards alleviating the instability that has characterised the LP environment for some time. However, specificity of the Development Planning process to LSC interests risks rendering even more difficult the development of effective working relationships between LPs and LSPs, and other regeneration agencies, which, this study has suggested, are already made more problematic than necessary by policy inconsistencies. So, there is a real danger of producing less headway than desirable for a mechanism that will:

- “allow LPs [to] demonstrate that they are “the learning arm of the local LSP” recognising that this is likely to be a developmental process for both partnerships.
- help the LSC and DfES set a framework which will clarify expectations for learning partnerships to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration.”

4.3 LSP Performance Management Framework

We recommend looking seriously at the accreditation and performance management processes for funded LSPs developed by the NRU. The Performance Management Framework (PMF) is currently being piloted by a small group of LSPs and includes a self-assessment template which provides the basis for development planning. The experience of the pilots is currently being evaluated and the NRU plans to roll out the PMF in late September 2003. Funded LSPs have been told that they will not have to adopt the NRU's performance management framework; they will be free to develop their own as long as it conforms to core criteria agreed by Ministers. However, it is likely that any alternative PMF will need to include sections on 'results', 'partnership working' and 'continuing improvement'.

There are three parts to the LSP performance management framework:

- The Partnership – a set of indicators to help the Partnership (Board level and sub groups or delivery focussed partnerships linked to the LSP) to measure its effectiveness in terms of partnership processes, structures, behaviours, roles and responsibilities. The aim is to be able to test the extent to which the Partnership is Strategic, Inclusive, Action Focussed, Performance Managed, Efficient and is a Partnership which learns.

- Added value – a framework to help the LSP capture performance information in its key role as co-ordinator/influencer of services. It involves tests which review both how well the partnership is achieving its targets and the ‘plausibility’ of what is being done delivering the desired outcomes.
- Action for improvement – a template to help prioritise those actions that the LSP needs to carry out to improve. This includes: partnership development, knowing needs and priorities for all local communities, changing what and how services are delivered, skills and knowledge implications, learning.

The NRU is placing increasing emphasis on the improvement measures rather than focusing on process indicators.

It is likely to best secure the LP’s goals of putting learning at the heart of regeneration processes if the LP can ensure that the LSP itself adopts appropriate learning priorities and strategies as part of its own planning processes. These will then be reviewed and further development identified as part of the LSP’s PMF activity. This suggests that, rather than adopting a parallel PMF for the regeneration aspects of its work, the LP aims to integrate its prioritising, reviewing and development action as much as possible into the work of the LSP itself.

Evidence from this study suggests that LPs are making serious strides in working effectively with LSPs. However, given the range of local circumstances and relationships, full integration will not always be possible. In lieu of LPs becoming an integrated part of LSP PMF arrangements and/or adopting the LSP performance management framework for use by LPs in a fairly wholesale fashion, there could be options of ‘borrowing’ appropriately – e.g.:

- the process of reviewing, scoring, identifying barriers and future action;
- some, if not all, of the partnership indicators (it may be appropriate to also develop specific sets of indicators around the two elements of the LP core role);
- identifying a set of priorities, with objectives and actions, with processes to measure outcomes and plausibility though, unlike for LSPs, these may not be drawn directly from government floor targets.

Performance management frameworks for other LSP sub-groups – e.g. that developed for the Home Office for Crime and Disorder Partnerships – need to articulate with the LSP PMF and this relationship could be interrogated.

There are obvious advantages in becoming part of, or adapting, the LSP performance management framework. It would support the first of the four ‘dimensions’ within LP’s regeneration remit suggested in Section 1.2: their internal partnership arrangements and conduct. Even where the LP is not fully integrated into the LSP planning and reviewing arrangements, linkage between LSPs and LPs would probably be reinforced if LPs used the LSP Performance Management Framework or a related sub-set. This would help closer alignment with LSP plans/ priorities and support LPs in being an integral part of these (a contribution to dimension 4), making it easier for LPs to demonstrate that they are “the learning arm of the local LSP” or how far they are along the road to so being. In most instances, alignment will increase, and the LP will be playing a worthwhile ‘learning arm’ function, the higher the level of integration into LSP processes.

Because the PMF is a self- assessment tool, the outcomes of which can be shared, it could ‘provide a framework for DfES and LSC which will clarify expectations for Learning Partnerships to maximise the contribution of learning to local regeneration’. It could

include a set of statements about activity and objectives which could reasonably be expected of the LP - in effect constituting a minimum level of performance – through there are arguments about how many of these statements, if any, should be generated at regional or national levels. Nonetheless, we would argue that such statements no matter where they are generated, and the LP priorities, objectives and actions that they give rise to, should range across the four dimensions of LP regeneration activity noted in Section 1.2:

- their internal partnership arrangements and conduct;
- how they raise aspirations and demand for learning in regeneration areas;
- how they encourage, facilitate and support others to deliver effective learning for regeneration;
- how they influence regeneration agencies and partnerships to ensure that learning is central to regeneration policy, planning, priorities and funding.

The statements would need to be sufficiently broad for LPs, Local LSCs, LSPs and other partners to use them as a framework within which to set the objectives and action which would best contribute to local regeneration and renewal needs.

An additional question is whether an initial ‘accreditation’ stage, analogous to that undertaken by funded LSPs, would be helpful as funding for LPs ceases to be ring fenced inside LLSC LID budgets. In principle, accreditation has the advantage of being a relatively transparent process – so, helpful to both sides - built upon broad standard expectations which are then interpreted against local needs and context.

4.4 Issues for investigation

A number of factors would need to be considered in deciding the merits of drawing upon the LSP performance management approach:

- The appropriateness and costs/benefits of the LSP accreditation process and performance management framework. If an accreditation option is attractive in principle, does the actual experience by GOs and LSPs of accreditation and the process suggest that it could be a useful model in practice? And, in relation to performance management, the LSP PMF is at an early stage so that any benefits of using it, weighed against time and costs for the LSPs and GOs, have not yet been fully established.
- The extent to which such a framework could capture the breadth of activity undertaken by LPs and the interests that LLSCs would have in funding LPs in the future. Clearly, if there were to be moves towards an agreed but locally sensitive and developmental performance management and planning tool, it will be necessary to develop a single model that takes as its starting point the policy context for LPs, the two core (collaboration and regeneration) roles given to them by government and the interests of the LSC as the funder.
- The potential reluctance of LPs and/or LLSCs to engage in accreditation or PMF processes. LPs would need to be convinced that any new process related properly to the scope of their activity and would not create too large a burden for thinly staffed partnerships. LLSCs would also need to be convinced of its value in relation to time expended and a model different from those for providers.

- The expectations must take account of LPs as voluntary, non-delivery, partnerships that have no ability to police or coerce their members - though this would be an issue for any PMF not just one derived from the LSP model.

A number of these issues would be obviated if LP planning and action were simply to be integrated into LSP planning and PMF processes. However, this may not be possible or a complete answer in some local contexts, either because the LP-LSP relationships are not sufficiently well developed or because the full range of the LP's priorities and actions are not appropriate for integration into the LSP framework.

Building on the LSP PMF and accreditation frameworks, rather than directly using the LSC Development Plan approach, would not negate the interests of Local LSCs. The bottom line is that they are LPs' funders and have to agree LPs' plans. Nor should it negate much of what is valuable about the LSC's new approaches. Linking the development and implementation of a PMF for Learning Partnerships with the LSC's 'Trust in the Future' principles and core values and a three year planning and funding cycle would almost certainly have beneficial effects on LPs' performance and stability. It would also be consistent with government's recognition of the need for sustained, structural approaches if we are to properly address regeneration and renewal needs.

Other approaches could be considered. Models for identifying value added, such as that developed for Learning Communities, could be considered. Alternatively, a set of value added and impact indicators could be developed from scratch, perhaps starting with the 'mind map' exercise on value added at the Learning Partnership Conference or drawn from the work of York Consulting Ltd.'s longitudinal evaluation or their work for individual LPs. However, we would suggest that the potential of LSP PMF and accreditation processes, aligned with LSC 'Trust in the Future' core values and principles, is likely to be a productive starting point. Decisions on which avenues to pursue will need to be integrated into the work on value added and performance that will be part of the LSC's review of its relationships with Learning Partnerships.

Annex 1 - Learning Partnerships that contributed information or whose practice was quoted

1	Hull
2	Doncaster
3	Wolverhampton
4	Solihull
5	Lincs and Rutland
6	Greater Nottingham
7	Kent
8	Slough
9	Cambridgeshire
10	Hertfordshire
11	Manchester
12	Halton
13	Cross River
14	London South
15	County Durham
16	Tees Valley
17	Gloucestershire
18	Leicestershire and Leicester City
19	Bedford (information drawn from East of England LPs-LLSCs Conference, March 2003)
20	West Sussex (information drawn from Learning Partnerships National Conference, March 2003)

In addition, corroboration was received from practice within the Learning Partnerships interviewed and featured in Helen English Associates, Collaboration: Learning Partnerships and Stakeholders. A Guide. DfES. 2003

Annex 2 – Methodology

In order to gather information on what Learning Partnerships (LPs) are doing/intend to do to fulfil their regeneration remit and identifying various models to fulfil items 1 and 3 of the brief it was decided to -

- Focus on LPs which had not been part of the York Consulting twenty Case Studies. In fact four York case studies were included as a result of our effort to cover a range of shire and unitary authorities because of the implications for LP structures and because, inevitably, there was a need, in the tight timeframe available for the work, to substitute for LPs ruled out through illness or absence.
- Use a guided interview approach in order to gather views from, ideally, Chairs and Managers about their progress on the regeneration agenda and the factors which supported or hindered this.
- Create a sample by asking Government Offices to identify Partnerships which they felt were making an effective start on their regeneration activity and Partnerships which were having problems. It was hoped that it might be possible to distinguish factors in the LPs structures and relationships which might create a readiness and an ability to make a more successful and more immediate contribution to the regeneration agenda.
- Hold an expert seminar to test out the findings as part of the research process.

The DfES commissioned a parallel piece of work to look at LPs' activity in relation to their collaboration remit. This study is also based on a set of interviews and it was agreed that the two research teams would co-ordinate their choice of LPs to interview and that each interview would include two questions around the other theme in order to extend the coverage.

Government Offices were asked to identify Partnerships which they felt were making an effective start on their regeneration activity, and Partnerships which were having problems, in order to create the sample for the interviews. This should have allowed comparisons to be made between the two groups and the factors which helped and hindered effective functioning. In fact, responses from Government Offices were not sufficiently precise to allow a clear split in the sample between the more and less effective Partnerships. In most cases there was a recommendation to talk with particular Partnerships but without a clear indication of why they had been selected. At the same time, the sample was complicated because we tried to ensure that Partnerships chosen covered a range of shire and unitary authorities, because of the implications for LSP structures, and also to ensure that the two research projects did not interview many of the same LPs. There was also the inevitable need to substitute Partnerships for ones selected but unavailable because of illness or absence in the tight timeframe allotted for the interviews.

Eighteen interviews were carried out for this regeneration study in the period between March 1st and 14th 2003 – two from each region with the exception of the South West (one interview) and the East Midlands (three interviews). Further material was gathered from the joint Learning Partnerships – LLSC conference in the East of England and the National LP Conference in Manchester, both in March 2003, from an expert seminar in June 2003 and from questions asked within the parallel “collaboration” study. Researchers engaged in the ‘collaboration’ study contributed feedback from an additional ten LPs on what they have been doing to progress the regeneration remit and what they see as enhancing or inhibiting factors. What was most striking about that

feedback was the extent to which it corroborated the findings and range of activity and issues of LPs interviewed in greater depth for this study.

In order to try again to clarify the relationship between the sample Partnerships and the general picture we went back to GOs after the interviews, told them who had been interviewed, and asked them to rate the Partnerships questioned on a five point scale from 5, “very effectively engaged with regeneration agencies and carrying out regeneration linked work”, through to 1, “finding engagement with regeneration agencies and issues more difficult”.

A minority of GOs did not respond or were unwilling to ‘rate’ the LPs interviewed in their region. The rating of the responses we received suggests that the sample is not unduly skewed either towards the “high flyers” or those struggling with the agenda. The fact that a similar picture of levels of engagement with regeneration agencies was found in the 10 additional LPs in the ‘collaboration’ study reinforces this reading. Similarly the discussion at the “expert seminar” made it clear that, in general terms, the picture presented by this study matched the experiences of the participants.

York Consulting Ltd. considered questions about regeneration activity as part of their final evaluation of Learning Partnerships and their report, released in February 2003, noted that 13 of the 20 case study Learning Partnerships were making a ‘contribution to regeneration’. A follow-up phone call to one of the researchers revealed that this judgement was based on feedback that those LPs were engaged one or more of three stages of activity, with most of the 13 engaging in ‘first stage’ activity, fewer in ‘second stage’ activity and only a small number evidencing ‘third stage’ action:

- First stage: LPs aligning themselves with LSPs – sitting on Boards, contributing to strategy development, helping to set up LSPs etc.;
- Second stage: LPs developing their own structures to link into LSPs;
- Third stage: specific projects using LSP funds with the LP leading.

These relate well to findings also identified in this study : the first two stages identified by York relate to the ‘positioning’ and alignment activity of Learning Partnerships; York’s ‘Stage 3’ relates to activity we note as generated as a consequence of LPs working with regeneration agencies, particularly LSPs. We are not sure that these stages are necessarily hierarchical. For example, LPs might use LSP funds in a form little different from any other ‘bidder’. On the other hand, they might be managing regeneration funds on behalf of an LSP, or other strategic or regeneration body, and making strategic decisions about the deployment of funding.

Annex 3 - Findings

A.0 Findings

The report takes the issues discussed in the interviews, the conferences mentioned in the methodology above, the discussion at the “expert seminar” and the comments made about regeneration issues by respondents in the investigation into collaboration. It tries to draw conclusions from this about the level of activity and the level of engagement from Learning Partnerships across the country and the models of engagement being used. The two major themes provide the framework for the discussion of findings. The section on “positioning” comes first partly because it is the pre-requisite for consistent effective action and secondly because, one year into the new remit, it appears to be where most LPs are focussing their efforts.

Evidence boxes

In each section of the “findings” there is an introductory text and, in some cases, other evidence from conference reports. This is followed by evidence boxes which record illustrative comments from the Learning Partnerships interviewed for the research. These comments not only provide the evidence for the statements made in Section 3 of the report but also illustrate the diversity of experience which is a characteristic of the Learning Partnerships.

A.1 “Positioning” – evidence supports section 3.1 in main body of report

A.1.1 Current situation

There is strong evidence to show that all of our sample of LPs are making active moves towards locating themselves effectively within the local political landscape and linking up with regeneration agencies.

At the East of England conference for Local LSCs and LPs it was reported that:

“delegates felt that progress on regeneration is more advanced in areas where there has been increased community empowerment and devolved funding. However, there is a need to further develop and support community capacity, a challenge which Learning Partnerships, in some instances, may be well placed to undertake. In addition, the voluntary and community sector needs an infrastructure to relieve it of the burden of bidding for and managing funding and assuring and enhancing the quality of successful projects. There are examples of Learning Partnerships which are seeking status as a legal entity with the aim of acting as a vehicle for resourcing, managing and delivering projects in collaboration with and on behalf of partners.

A major barrier to working with LSPs in some instances is where Community Plans have been developed without the involvement of Learning Partnerships and where a need for learning has not been recognised explicitly within the Plan.

A second barrier for both Learning Partnerships and local LSCs is one of capacity. Effective representation on LSPs needs to be both high level and on-going. In counties where there are several LSPs this can present severe challenges, to both Learning Partnerships and to LLSCs, in terms of the demands on the time of senior staff.

The fact that local LSCs receive no additional funding in order to fulfil their new statutory role in respect of LSPs can sometimes lead to this work being deemed to be of low priority". (NIACE conference report)

Examples and comments from the interviews

These have been organised by the structure of LPs in terms of the models described below. It is important to recognise that the two models identified are the ends of the spectrum of structures which make up learning partnerships. There is a range of arrangements between the two extremes

“Unitary”

Firstly there is the Metropolitan Borough/“Unitary” scenario with a single LP, probably single LEA and LSP and linked to an overarching LSC and sub regional groupings. All the LPs had effective roles in providing the learning focus for the LSPs in their area. Six out of the eight were formally recognised as the ‘learning arm’.

Key phrases from the responses:

Scope of LPs:

Single LA, LSP, one FE college and LP. LP is a sub partnership of the LSP.

One LEA, one FE college, one HEI.

Positioning:

Accepted as learning arm of LSP a year ago but LSP not clear what they want LP to do.

Working with LSP on Community Plan. Hopes to take lead on ‘Learning and Inclusion’ sub group.

Long term involvement with SRB.

Becoming a member of the developing LSP.

LP re-arranging itself to fit LSP and become the learning arm.

Recognised as the learning arm - the Specialist Strategic Partnership of LSP for ‘Life Chances and Employment’.

“Shire”

A second model is the large LP, often a Shire County, covering the same area as the LLSC, one or more LEAs, a greater number of District Council LSPs and a range of FE providers. Seven out of the eleven LPs in this model had effective roles in providing the learning focus for the LSPs in their area. Four out of the nine were formally recognised.

Key phrases from the responses:

Scope of LP:

Some funded wards in City and the LP is recognised as the learning arm. Of the non-funded LSPs, some accept LP as learning arm. Eleven local LPs.

7 LSPs – four funded

7 District Council LSPs

Positioning:

No funded LSPs. Representation on several LSPs and in some cases adopted as learning arm.

Has established Local Learning groups successfully to become the learning arms of all LSPs. Submitting SRB proposals through LSPs.

Local learning forums link to LSPs.

Members of the Partnership sit on LSPs from their own organisations. LEA accepts that LP makes the learning input to LSPs.

Gradually the LSPs are recognising the local LPs as the local strategic arms for learning, not a formal position as yet.

Located as learning arm of County wide LSP from April 2003. Directly linked to Community Strategy. County wide LSP draws together District Council LSPs.

Link through City 16 plus sub group of LP to LSP in City, member of over-arching County LSP, working with 7 District Council LSPs – piloting local learning fora in 2/7. LP recognised formally as the 'People and Skills' Theme Group of the RDA sub regional Economic Partnership.

Local learning groups were in place before LSPs. LSPs grateful to see them and use them. LSC and LP worked together to support local learning groups. LSC support the two overarching LSPs and LP supports three District Council LSPs.

Past the 'toddler stage' with regeneration agenda, foundations in place, everyone moving towards the same goal, LP has tried to create position with LSPs, has a lot to offer, wants encouragement from LSC and GO to get LSPs to engage local LPs.

Working strongly towards being the thematic group for the LSPs on education and skills - builds from successful collaboration.

The East of England conference noted that:

“The barriers to engaging with LSPs might be overcome if both Learning Partnerships and the local LSC attempt to ensure that learning is given a sufficiently strong emphasis in LSP priorities by:

- Ensuring that LSPs have a board member with a learning remit;
- Providing consistent senior representation at board level from Learning Partnerships and/or local LSCs;
- Pragmatically agreeing division of labour in order to ensure adequate levels of representation and influence in respect of learning;
- Ensuring that learning is high on the LSP board agenda;
- Articulating how learning is needed to achieve even apparently non-learning-related goals.

Learning Partnerships could offer a neutral brokerage role in order to ensure that LSPs have adequate and balanced representation. Learning Partnerships may also wish to consider if they would be more effective if they reconfigured their

structure and geographic remit in order to correspond more closely with LSP areas.

Local LSCs can ensure that regeneration is a high and explicit priority in their own strategic plans.”(NIACE conference report, March 2003).

Further supporting evidence on “positioning”

As a check on the degree to which LPs were recognised as being players within the regeneration landscape we asked Learning Partnerships whether they had been involved in drawing up ‘Action on Learning Plans’ and whether they had been involved in the accreditation process for LSPs carried out by Government Offices.

Action on Learning Plans: Out of those LPs with NRF funded LSPs in their area, most had become involved in Action on Learning Plans.

Involved in accreditation process for LSPs: Only in a few cases had Government Offices engaged the views of Learning Partnerships specifically in their accreditation process for funded LSPs. This may say as much about the internal communications within GOs and the relationship between GOs and LPs than it does about the alignment of LPs with LSPs. Again, it is only NR funded LSPs which would have been assessed.

A.1.2 Who do the LPs identify as the key partners for them on regeneration?

The point was made in more than one interview: does the LP itself have to have the links if the Partners are already involved with agencies? There is probably an issue here of long term functioning and what happens when memberships change.

From the interviews the following agencies were mentioned as key partners for the regeneration agenda:

GO
LEA Adult Education
FE
LSPs
Local LPs, Local Learning Forums/Groups or similar
SSP
Health
SRB
RDA
District Councils
Jobcentre Plus
IAG Partnership
Community Groups
HE
WEA
Faith Groups
Economic Development City, County and Districts.
Voluntary and Community Organisations
Crime and Disorder Partnerships
LEA
Borough

A.1.3 How have links been developed?

Most use a mixture of cross representation both formal and informal and mutually supportive structures. The strength of cross representation is highlighted especially in the small Local Authority led situations. There is great value in networking by managers and Board members. Is there a difference between formal links and recognition and those informal arrangements where Partners just happen to be on a series of groups?

Key phrases from the responses:

There is cross membership but formal links do not always help.

Personal representation by manager, linkages through Local Learning Groups and LSPs.

Cross membership is a vital part of the links in these partnerships and alliances.

Cross membership between LSP and LP. Cross membership is an important feature of local authority type activity in these areas.

Cross representation but not planned.

By seeking out representation, cross membership, getting onto organisation Boards, annual conference has good attendance, Community Learning Forums, informal linkages, pro-active in making the place of the LP clear and offering collaborative activity

Careful not to over step position, adding value not control.

Proactive work of manager and Board members.

A.1.4

i) What has helped positioning with regard to regeneration agencies?

A number of key points about what helps 'positioning' with regeneration agencies emerged: a positive stance from the LSP; regeneration acting as a positive focus for collaboration; the longevity of partnerships; the advantages of a working in a small area; timing in with the development of LSPs; effective management. The comments also show a general clarity among LPs about what needs to be done and the things which get in the way.

Key phrases from the responses:

Location of the LP as an agency within the LSP.

Close relationship with LSP, support from LSC, effective team, track record on delivery.

Regeneration gives strategy incentive to collaborate.

Small geographical area; all key people round the table.

The longevity of the partnership.

Being there at the start with LSPs; formal part of LSP planning structure.

Able to identify people to contribute to regeneration projects, wide knowledge of who does what.

The development of Local Learning Forums.

The LP's image as honest broker.

It depends on getting the relationship with LSP right and LSP getting relationship with other bodies right.

People become used to working together.

Long track record in locality.

Effectiveness of LP delivery and momentum draws people in.

ii) What has hindered positioning with regard to regeneration agencies?

Again there is a wide range of factors that hinder alignment and engagement: The lack of resources both for action and as "seduction" money to draw in partners; the lack of human resources; the politics of who shall lead from within the LP on learning in regeneration; the lack of policy pressure on regeneration agencies to link up with LPs (all the activity is by the LPs trying to make the links); tight timetables for bidding make collaborative responses difficult. There are no incentives for collaborative activity in funding methodologies. There is a possible problem over the concentration on skills by regeneration agencies and a corresponding lack of interest in learning more generally.

Key phrases from the responses:

The divide between education and skills in the minds of economic development agencies.

The pressure to bid against tight timetables prevents or hinders collaboration

Some difficulties from LSP where most NR money goes.

The lack of policy clout means LPs have to earn their place with LSPs and SSPs. Success in this depends on the strength of Chair/manager.

Confusions over LSPs and how they fit in; conflicting and unlinked initiatives.

LPs are not part of regeneration agencies' development plans or central policy. It is LP coordinators who are constantly networking to bring them into their activities. Constant change in policy and remit for LPs.

Lack of large funding streams through LPs to bring regeneration to the table.

Concentration on operational targets as easy to measure rather than a focus on development.

Lack of certainty over future with no ring fenced funding in LID, puts continuity at risk.

Knowing what to prioritise given the national remit.

Constant change of LP brief.

Less well developed collaboration at middle management level.

Existing structures, people, personalities, egos, complexity of partnership arrangements.

Money and the lack of human resources.

The difficulty of making links to SMEs.

A.1.5 Does the LP have any way of measuring whether it is being effective in preparing to deliver the regeneration remit?

There are few examples of any systematic testing of the success in preparing to work with regeneration agencies.

One LP did not see evaluation as appropriate: the LP exists to simply pass information, create links, signposting and helping people find partners. "We could bid to run a regeneration project but on whose behalf? The Partnership itself does not make these things happen; we bring people together. But we can't track that." There are further examples of Partnerships' approaches to self evaluation in the Learning Partnerships' Tool Kit.

Methods mentioned either in place or planned:

Annual self review and report.

Feedback from community partners.

Developing a plan with performance indicators.

Baseline audits to assist the measurement of the effectiveness of regeneration activity.

Some hard targets but also softer ones eg influencing others – this is harder to measure.

Now using a more restricted set of indicators – participation, national targets, young people's performance, with specific measures for work in deprived areas.

There needs to be a clearer definition of regeneration and some clarity about expectations in funded LSPs as opposed to the rest.

A.2 Regeneration activity being undertaken - evidence supports section 3.2 in main body of report

A.2.1 Current situation

Again within our specific definition of activity in regeneration, i.e. engagement with regeneration agencies and their actions, we are seeing high levels of linked activity with LPs working alongside regeneration agencies and particularly LSPs.

In the discussion at the East of England Conference:

“It was recognised that regeneration activity might well be one of the areas of most variation between Learning Partnerships. The regeneration remit could well translate very differently on the ground in different parts of the region. Examples from the region included:

- Setting up local learning groups co-terminus with LSP boundaries;
- Involvement and influence in writing Community Plans and Community Strategies and ensuring that learning is embedded in them;
- Making sure that learning is embedded in all LSP activities;
- Taking messages to the local LSC and other agencies;
- Challenging boundaries and silo thinking;
- Knowing who does what and who needs what;
- Working through community groups and supporting community-based organisations;
- Ensuring that action arises from dialogue with community members;
- Taking learning into the community;
- Developing learner champions.”

Specific regeneration work on plans and activities

Key phrases from the responses

Working on major city centre education/business base.

Neighbourhood Learning Fund support for progression routes from family learning Works with 3 other LPs on Objective 1 initiatives.

Particular focus on neighbourhood development, Neighbourhood Management pilots for New deal for Communities.

Learning programme based on the 'Common Purpose' programme for LP and LSP members and FE College deliverers.

Working on Community Plans.

Local learning development team from SRB, 'voice of the learner' infrastructure development and seeking funding for all regeneration related projects; LSP priorities influence Local Learning groups and delivery organisations.

Projects on regeneration themes using NOF, SRB, Economic Development and LP funds.

Local action plans for learning from Local Learning Forums, planning collaborative bid to LID next year.

NRF for basic skills, and crime and disorder.

Working on NRF project proposals.

LSPs and Local Learning partnerships working together on LIF funded regeneration.

Managing project for the LSP under Learning in Deprived Communities initiative – embedded basic skills.

Continuing work on SRB and carry through after end of funding.

Large amount of involvement in mapping and planning at a strategic level; involved in Neighbourhood Management projects.

Using NRF to develop and run City Basic Skills Consortium, signed agreements, joint delivery plan.

Major brokerage project in development with IAG using RDA sub regional partnership funds with Job centre Plus and Business Link.

There are further examples of activity by LPs in the Learning Partnerships' Tool Kit

A.2.2 What debates have taken place about the regeneration role of the LP?

Most Partnerships appear to have evolved their way following some direction from Government remit changes but also doing what seems sensible to add value. Some LPs were already developing links with emerging LSPs before the remit change. Generally there is a quite pragmatic response.

Responses could be grouped into three areas:

- LPs which put together a set of events/activities to help develop the way forward – seven came into this category;
- LPs which found the new remit an easy move to make: the major issue was how to do it – four came into this category;
- LPs which were unsure how to deal with the new remit – two fell into this category.

Key phrases from the responses

There is tension between the economic thrust of the SSP and the focus of LSP. LP is caught in the middle. LP works for both but with no agreed role.

There is a limited focus on non funded LSPs.

How to be the learning arm for LSPs when there are 9 District based LSPs and 1 overarching LSP?

Unclear about the role and future of LPs and the transition from GO to LLSC funding.

Mapped where to add value to LSC objectives, neutral forums, research and development and innovative activity, collaborative work which keeps partnerships together.

Debate around whether LP has a strategic role or a supporting role providing the infrastructure and the facilitation of collaboration.

A.2.3 Is the LP trying to develop strategic activity or is it just facilitating pieces of work with a regeneration link?

It depends on alignment with the LSP and the LLSC how far the LP just does work on regeneration or inclusion issues or takes part in the development of strategy. The position here also depends on the way the LP interprets its role. The LP may not see itself as a strategic planner but as a facilitator of collaborative activity providing solutions and a support for those with strategic roles and remits. In this case the LP provides the “hardware of collaboration” – the working groups and processes – which can support the needs of various strategic and funding agencies including LSC, LSPs and RDA sub regional partnerships.

Eleven of the LPs interviewed felt they were trying to make strategic responses. Some accepted that at this stage they could only carry out work with a link to regeneration rather than influencing strategy but wished to aspire to this. Others felt that a voluntary partnership may not be able to do strategic planning.

Key phrases from the responses

Developing a framework to support participation in Neighbourhood Renewal

Local skills strategy.

Clear strategic framework.

It feels strategic.

Prime role is strategic.

Working strategically via LSPs and Local Learning Groups.

Setting up Local Learning Forums, identifying gaps and needs.

Developing strategic shape under the aims and objectives of the City Council but funding opportunities do not always match. It is hard to turn away from funding even if it is not quite a match for needs.

Really doing bits of activity with a link to regeneration

.
More about being strategic about what the LP is doing rather than contributing to regeneration strategy.

A number of pieces of work with regeneration significance.

Being encouraged to focus on activity and not strategy with some attempt to focus on hard targets.

Doing small scale pieces of work which help – not strategic.

LP sees position as reactive at the moment, trying to take people with you.

LP sees role as providing collaborative support to delivering the strategies of LSC, LSPs, SSP.

A.2.4 What barriers has the LP come up against in trying to develop appropriate activity?

Issues identified in the responses related to:

- Partnership and members
- LSPs
- Policy
- Funding streams
- Local LSCs

Partnership and members

The capacity of staff at senior levels in some partners.

Capacity, staff limitations. The LP executive carries out the role on the back of busy jobs.

Lack of money and person power.

Some issues of trust and competition but not other than would be expected.

Poor relationships caused by the 14-19 nightmare.

Competing agendas.

Understanding what and how. What does it mean to deliver skills and learning plan?

Communication.

In one case lack of engagement by Management Group and lack of commitment to partnership working.

Communication of regeneration themes to beneficiaries and staff at grass roots. No training in local services and learning delivery agencies about what neighbourhood renewal is.

LSPs

Slow development of LSPs.

LSPs not all having learning in Plans.

Borough autonomy. Regeneration is seen as what the Boroughs/LEAs do.

A difficult relationship with the Borough with most NRF.

Capacity to work with large number of LSPs.

Policy

The difficulty of knowing what the government wants us to do.

Lack of clarity on role of LP. Uncertainty about future. It takes time to build and we are not sure if we are here to stay.

The destabilising effect of national reviews.

The pace of policy and initiative when set against the time it takes to achieve real impacts in this kind of work.

Funding streams

Performance Indicators not always compatible with regeneration remit; reporting achievement to multiple bodies is time consuming; different funding streams have different PIs. Problem comes where projects are funded from multiple streams.

LP is independent of other agencies but all the others are bigger and free to take initiatives or bid independently.

Funding that leaves no slack for development activity within LP's resources.
Not enough time for sophisticated bidding processes.

Tight timescales for bidding makes collaborative bids difficult.

Funding that does not allow infrastructure development.

Issues relating to relationships with LLSCs are identified in section 3.3 below.

A.2.5 Does the LP have any way of measuring whether it is being effective in delivering activity within the regeneration remit?

Few LPs have effective ways of monitoring their performance in general terms let alone focussing on regeneration.

There was much work in progress described and also frequent comments that it is too early to see effects of activity. Many of the same points were made as in the section above which reported feedback on whether LPs have ways of measuring whether they are being effective in preparing to deliver the regeneration agenda. Additional points are recorded below.

There is some development work being undertaken in establishing baselines and evaluation procedures. In one example, targets are drawn from local LSC, County Community Foundation, LEA etc then monitored. Another LP sets targets in an operational plan and monitors achievement. One respondent saw the measurement as about process - including how far the LP had helped others to access resources, engaged new groups on behalf of LLSC. Another saw the measure as being effective integration with and contribution to the work of the LSP. Another saw the need to measure success of the LSP's plans as way to test LP contribution. Another is establishing evaluation measures to test Partners' views of the effectiveness of the LP process of facilitating collaborative infrastructure. Another saw the need for long term longitudinal studies to track individuals' experiences.

There are further examples of Partnership's approaches to self evaluation in the Learning Partnerships' Tool Kit.

A.3 Exploring the current relationship with the local LSC and LEAs on the regeneration issue - *evidence relates to 3.3 and 3.4 of main report*

A.3.1 Relationship with LSC on regeneration

There is a range of practice by LLSCs in the ways in which they engage with LPs on regeneration issues. In some cases LPs have stated in the interviews that this results

from the variable experience of LLSC staff. The interviews did not reflect a consistent relationship between LLSCs and LPs on regeneration issues across the country or over time. Some LLSCs and LPs have a very strong and integrated approach – e.g. sharing support of local groupings, paying for part-time local co-ordinators. Other LLSCs take little active part in making links to LPs on this issue.

As we pointed out earlier, the responses to the interviews suggest that the smaller Unitary-based LPs make better, more natural relationships with their single LSPs and the regeneration issues. This is a harder task where a large Shire based LP has to contend with a number of LSPs, some funded and some not. Evidence shows this can be overcome by creating sub-structures which link closely to the LSPs although this raises further issues around capacity, communications and resources. At the same time the interviews suggest that where the LP and the LLSC are co-terminous, effective LLSC-LP relationships are easier than where there are a number of LPs within the LLSC area.

When we looked at the different patterns of geographical patterns of LSCs and LPs it was clear that within our sample those LPs which were in a one to one relationship with the LLSC tended to be more likely to identify strong working links.

There is a clear difficulty identified of aligning the LP emphasis on the process of collaboration with LLSC target driven approach. There is a difficulty in assessing the added value from collaborative working. This is a general issue relating to all LP activity and will be an important issue as LLSCs and LPs develop agreements for their core funding.

LPs report that some LLSCs do not demonstrate a clear position on their engagement with regeneration issues. One manager felt that “regeneration should be higher up the agenda of the LSC and the local LSC. What does regeneration mean to them?”

At the East of England Conference:

“ the following instances of collaboration between the Learning Partnership and the local LSC drawn from the region were regarded as being examples of good practice:

- Working together to establish a horizontal dialogue between strategic players and people in communities;
- A working relationship that is underpinned by trust, belief and a willingness to be pragmatic;
- The capacity of key individuals to work together and to identify opportunities for action;
- The close working relationships between both organisations and the Local Education Authority (LEA) enabling people to see the benefit of using and improving existing structures rather than inventing new ones;
- Both organisations participating in more than one LSP ensured consistency and helped share good practice;
- The recognition by both organisations of the time and effort needed to bring different organisations and processes to acceptable levels of effectiveness and to ensure that all members share commitment to common goals;
- The local LSC’s decision to channel Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities funding through the Learning Partnership.

Some of the ways in which local LSCs could support Learning Partnerships both directly and indirectly included:

- Sharing with Learning Partnerships the responsibility for participation in LSPs;
- Helping communities to understand the learning infrastructure;
- Supporting the capacity-building of community organisations;
- Supporting the development of learner champions;
- Supporting the professional development of Learning Partnership staff in respect of the regeneration agenda.” (NIACE conference report)

Some key phrases from the responses

Good relationship

LLSC has asked LP to report on 6 key areas, one of which is regeneration.

LLSC supports the LP becoming the learning arm of the LSP.

LP appraises co-financing bids for LLSC.

LP developed basic skills plan for LSC.

LP helps with LIF allocations.

LLSC holds LP manager/chairs co-ordination meetings

Consultation by LLSC on strategy.

LLSC supports Local Learning Groups as the appropriate place for planning about neighbourhood renewal; LP represents the LSC on Groups. Bite size has been delivered through LLGs.

LLSC support for Local Learning Forums and it funds part time co-ordinators. LLFs may become channel for LID. Strong relationship; work closely with directorate; ongoing, regular communication; more formal protocol through operational plan.

LLSC values LP and recognises role in AWI and StAR and collaboration.

LLSC recognises LSPs have the regeneration remit but feels education input should come from LP. Last year, three year LIF funding was delegated to LSPs to be worked on with Local LPs.

Protocol being developed with LLSC; sorting out relationship; looking for funds to develop specific areas – eg NLDC, advising on plans, advising on specific regeneration issues such as Basic Skills, ICT community development. Regular meetings at senior level; Equality and Diversity and Learning Communities Task Groups.

The desire by LLSC to use the LP puts stresses on the resource base.

Working together on ‘Action on Learning Plan’ for City. Working out joint way to handle local learning fora

Less good relationship

LLSC is contract and target driven.

No clear relationship with LLSC over regeneration.

LLSC recognises LP role in co-ordinating activity but not on more strategic issues.

It feels as though the LP is more into regeneration than the LLSC at moment.
LP believes all its work is about regeneration.

Little structural link to LLSC.

In general the LLSC do not come to us.

The relationship with LLSC on regeneration is weak. Concern over new funding via LSC. LP agenda is broader and the LP offers levels of access and thinking not always recognised.

Use of Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund as an indicator of the relationship between LP and LLSC

As an indicator of the way in which LPs and LLSCs are getting together around regeneration issues, we asked whether the LPs had been actively involved in the spending of specific LSC funds – in particular, Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities. Around half of the learning partnerships interviewed had some form of engagement with the use of these funds.

Examples of levels of involvement:

- Current and active: funds used by LP to support progression from Family Learning; LP developed prospectus; funds spent to support LP supported neighbourhood plans; LP involved in planning; working through LP local learning groups; Partnership bidding to manage the Fund; consultation and co-ordination through LP local groupings.
- Future possibility: LP invited to meeting about next year's fund; not been mentioned to LP by LLSC, LP heard about it from Partners, LP in discussion, allocated through Voluntary and Community sector in year 1 – LP involved for next year

A.3.2 Relationship with LEAs on regeneration

Considering that 11 out of our 18 Partnerships are hosted by Local Authorities there is a surprisingly mixed response to this question.

Key phrases from the responses

Good relations

LEA supports role of the LP with LSPs and regeneration.

Very good relationships with Economic Development in the LA.

Direct link between the Local Authority Strategy team and LP.

There are strong links to ACL but LP is not seen as the channel for all learning activity.

Joint work on SRB.

Difficult to split LEA and LP.

LP tends to be the vehicle for learning input. Very close relationship.

LEAs see link as important.

LEA is supportive and accepts that the LP makes the learning input. There are LEA reps on all LSPs.

LEAs are core members of Local LPs.

Very close relationship through ACL staff link.

Less good relations

LEA has no role in regeneration.

Difficult relations with LEA.

Relationship is close but LEA operates in silos on regeneration and responsibilities are not clarified.

There is potential competition with the LEA over the lead of the Learning sub group of the LSP.

No link between the Director of Education and LP.

LEAs are involved in own Borough LPs rather than the overarching LP.

A.4 Identifying the key characteristics of the Partnership which may affect its ability to deliver on the regeneration agenda - *Section A.4 onwards relates to Section 3.5 onwards of the main report*

This section attempts to identify the characteristics of the Partnerships which support the movement of LPs in to the regeneration arena and those which hamper this process. The sample of LPs interviewed did not in fact allow us to create neat categories of those which were more or less effective on the regeneration issues. As a result, judgements about those Partnerships which were more successful have had to be made from internal evidence in the interview and consultants' views.

It is difficult to disentangle factors which support only the regeneration remit. To some extent it is inevitable that those Partnerships which were effective in their original remit and effective as a focus for collaboration would have a better platform from which to move on to the additional regeneration focussed remit. In fact, it is probable that they would have been making some of the links anyway. As a result of this it is also inevitable that factors which support making Partnerships generically successful will also enhance their ability to be effective in the regeneration role.

A.4.1 Partnership structure and active partners

Partnerships have such diverse Board arrangements that it is hard to generalise about what arrangements might provide more effective support for the regeneration agenda. Clearly some have a more directive Executive grouping than others but it appears that strong approaches to form and apparent function can be overwhelmed by disputes between agencies. The impact of an individual or an organisation can galvanise a Partnership or prevent any creative activity

There are examples where structures have been overlapped with regeneration and other Partnerships to create mutually supportive organisation and to avoid duplication and a proliferation of working groups.

Key phrases from the responses

Close links with neighbouring LP within same LLSC – shared sub groups.

Wide ranging Partnership – shares theme groups with other sub partnerships

Groups set up with LSPs to include Economic Development County and District. Each chaired by Executive member.

There are examples where the strength of the Partnership derives from an operational group drawing the Partnership together with a wide view but with a more operational focus than the Board. In these situations we get Partnerships which bridge the strategic and operational and add value in a very powerful way.

Key phrases from the responses

Operational Group reporting to the Executive – this is where the action happens. Five Local Learning groups – reporting to the Executive - recognised as learning arms of LSPs. LSP links very strong. It is possible that Operational Group will split into 5 to handle this. Shifting set of priority groups report to Operational Group.

Large steering group, work takes place in sub groups.

Executive group of 15 with 5 operational groups chaired by executive members plus a Basic skills Task Group – short life action groups.

Large main Board and 4 sub groups – E learning, 14-19, ACL, Workforce Development. Emphasis on local learning partnerships which match LSPs. Chairs of local groups on main LP. Full LP meetings sparsely attended, monthly meetings at Borough level but GO recognise LP as the strategic body.

Implementation Team – operational group very important plus working groups.

There are examples where the LP has re-structured to match LSPs:

Key phrases from responses

Increasing emphasis on local learning partnerships which match LSPs. Chairs of local groups on main LP. Full LP meetings sparsely attended, monthly meetings at Borough level but GO recognise LP as the strategic body.

Five Local Learning groups – report to Executive, recognised as learning arms of LSPs.

Local Learning forums in each District – seems right size and shape. Plan to fund part-time co-ordinators from next year.

Some Partnerships have found engaging the Voluntary and Community Sector difficult at an area level because of the lack of an appropriate structure within that sector. There are examples of Learning Partnerships which have supported the development of those structures to make this engagement possible or found other ways to make effective links

Key phrases from responses

No involvement with voluntary sector – no overarching organisation.

No natural voluntary organisation to use as a representative.

No overarching voluntary sector organisation to use.

Supporting development of voluntary sector consortium.

Capacity building with voluntary and community sector. Developing a 'toolkit' looking at training needs of people working in the community.

There are some interesting examples of Business Chairs and also in one case a Chief Constable. The intention is to create a more outward looking Partnership – one which

clearly goes beyond provider interests. It is probably too early to see whether this is effective but is a strong gesture towards stressing the inclusive nature of the Partnership and the desire to address broader issues.

Key phrases from responses

Chair is private employer.

Slim Board, Chair from large employer.

New chair is Chief Constable, hope for more strategic role, inclusion, accent on learners not providers.

There are a number of ways in which unsupportive situations emerge. There are examples where the attitude of the executive group does not lend support – where, for example, one Chief Executive from an education service thinks the Partnership has no future. There are examples where problems with 14-19 issues have caused problems within partnerships. There are examples where the previous history of local government organisational changes has left problems. There are problems with the sheer number of LSPs in some areas – the sheer scale of the problem of engagement – see model below. There are also examples where an over arching LP has to deal with the desire of Borough LSPs to go their own way.

Key phrases from responses

Reviewing structures and inter relationship of partnerships because of lack of co-operation.

A provider partnership, employer involvement is weak, links to NHS Workforce Development.

Management group not active, own agendas, resist their staff being involved in LP, it is a network not a partnership. Not good communications from activity to Management group.

Difficulty in engaging larger businesses, focus towards SME needed

A.4.2 Coverage and match of coverage, co-terminosity

Different models of LSPs exist in different areas presenting differing challenges as regards their engagement with Learning Partnerships. The discussion at the East of England Conference suggested that a Learning Partnership working within the area of a single Unitary Authority, and hence a single LSP, may find collaboration and progress more straightforward than will a Learning Partnership operating across a Local Authority with several LSPs in place. The picture may be further confused in instances where there is a single county-wide LSP in addition to several district-based LSPs.

There are a number of arrangements which occur among the LPs which force the LPs into relationships with those agencies which have statutory rights and duties to exist and plan while the LPs themselves do not. There is spectrum of relationships but two main models are emerging at the two ends of the spectrum.

Firstly there is the Metropolitan Borough/”Unitary” scenario with a single LP, probably single LEA and LSP and linked to an overarching LSC and sub regional groupings.

There is one example of a large urban Partnership being dismantled to create a Learning Partnership which matches more closely to the LSP. This is very cohesive and the linkages between LSP and LP can be very powerful. This means that the involvement of the LP in regeneration activity can be very close and effective. The success of this model also depends on the ability of the LLSC to handle the groupings of LPs in its area. In some cases the LLSC over-arches six or more Learning Partnerships. There is some evidence from the interviews that LLSCs in this situation are considered less effective partners by LPs than are LLSCs in the second model.

“Unitary”

Key phrases from responses

Everything but the LSC is coterminous.

One Local Authority, one FE College.

Small area with one FE College, one LEA and one HE institution.

A single Local Authority partnership.

LP covers half the LLSC area, City LEA plus conurbation, working with City LSP, plus other LSPs.

Same area as Unitary Borough Council, one of 6 LAs in the LLSC area.

LP recently redrawn from wider City wide grouping. LSC covers much larger area. New arrangement of LP matches LSP. LSP includes 5 SRB projects and NRF.

Match to Unitary LA, one of 6 in LLSC area, Connexions and IAG match LSC with local arm, Jobcentre Plus covers two Boroughs. 10 out of the 21 wards have NRF plus 3 which have SRB.

Secondly, there is the large LP, often a Shire County, covering the same area as the LLSC, one or more LEAs, a greater number of District Council LSPs and a range of FE providers. These groupings have had to devise ways to create sub structures which allow them to interact with the LSPs. The quality of that sub structure development determines the effectiveness of the regeneration link for the LP. The powerful link between LLSC and LP is easier to establish in this situation but the ability to create and maintain the local sub structure depends on the capacity of the Partnership – it may be an issue of sheer scale – and its ability to sustain effective communication between the local partnerships and the overall LP. One LP has five LSPs and has developed five successful Local Learning Groups. Others are trying to work with 9 or more and that stretches capacity to the limit. Timing of the sub structure development was also important. Where the move was made in the formative stages for LSPs the link has probably been easier. Where the creation of the sub structure has been delayed because of capacity problems it may be more difficult to make effective linkages between the local partnership and the LSP. Where Districts have no educational responsibility it may be easier to make links than where the LEA has the dominant position in a Unitary authority. In a number of cases the County has developed an over arching LSP of its own. In at least one example the LP has become the learning arm of the County LSP rather than the District level groupings. Within our sample those LPs which were in a one to one relationship with the LLSC tended to be more likely to identify strong working links between LPs and LLSCs than those with a Unitary structure.

There is a variant on the Shire model. This is the situation where an LP spreads across a range of LSPs, some funded, based on Boroughs which are themselves unitary authorities with LEAs and a high degree of autonomy. This example has been drawn to our attention through the interviews in London particularly but also exists elsewhere. The issue is still how to relate to the LSPs but it can be more difficult to find ways in. Where there is effective activity in this model it seems to be focussed very strongly between the LSPs and the local learning partnerships and more loosely linked under the Learning Partnership.

“Shire”

Key phrases from responses

LP matches to LEA and LSC, 8 NRF wards in City, 8 LSPs plus County wide LSP, two Sub regional Strategic Partnerships across boundaries. 11 Local LPs. Problems are the size of the area, number of Local LPs and LSPs.

Match to County Council and most of LSC, no NRF, 12 Community Learning Fora, Problem is number of LSPs.

Matches to most of LSC area. LEA matches to LP. No NRF. 5 local learning forums match to LSPs. 2 SRB areas.

Same area as LSC and LEA.

Some difficulty linking to District LSPs – 2 tier authority mind set.

LP covers 5 Boroughs, 4/5 have NRF, IAG same cover, match to LSC. Created local LPs mostly through local LSPs.

2 tier County system is simple as far as learning alone goes because Districts have no role, but on regeneration and learning linked to regeneration there can be friction and complexity.

Covers City and County, 2 LEAs, 7 District LSPs, one City with NRF and one over arching County LSP - area matches LLSC.

At the East of England Conference

“the establishment of local learning groups co-terminus with LSP boundaries was regarded as being of paramount importance. Ideally the groups should seek recognition as the “learning arms” of LSPs and a representative, normally the Chair, should serve on the main LSP strategic group. Learning Partnerships, through their local learning groups, should encourage LSPs to develop Local Learning Plans or to ensure that Community Plans contain chapters devoted to learning.”

The development of LLSC Strategic Area Review could be important. One Partnership mentions trying to encourage the LLSC to carry out at least the basic work on StAR on the basis of District Council areas in order to lock into the LSPs and to provide a driver for the development of local learning groupings.

The responses to the interviews suggest that the smaller Unitary based LPs make better, more natural relationships with their single LSPs and the regeneration issues. This is a harder task where a large Shire based LP has to contend with a number of LSPs, some funded and some not. This can be overcome by creating sub-structures which link closely to the LSPs. At the same time the interviews suggest that where the

LP and the LLSC are co-terminous effective relationships are easier than where there are a number of LPs within the LLSC area.

A.4.3 Nature of the host organisation

Out of the 18 LPs interviewed, 11 were hosted by Local Authorities, 2 by FE Colleges, 1 by the Sub regional Strategic Partnership, 1 University, 1 Careers Company, 1 by a Learning City and 1 by Learning Towns.

There is no clear evidence of the effectiveness for the regeneration remit of any particular host organisation. There are comments about problems with particular hosts in particular settings – LEAs in one particular area are mentioned as a problem without any further amplification. There is an interesting example of professional development where all the management team in the Partnership hosted by the university are following higher degrees related to the work.

There are issues about legal entity and financial independence once serious amounts of development funding is being accessed. One Partnership from the sample is setting up a company/trust to manage Partnership provision. So far there have been no concerns expressed by providers about the setting up of a separate provider organisation. This Partnership also receives considerable funding from subscriptions from partners. This income together with top slicing project funds provides a degree of financial independence

Interestingly, one LP which moved from Connexions to be hosted by a sub regional strategic partnership in the interests of cohesion on the regeneration/economic development agenda, has found the relationship to be more difficult than expected.

A.4.4 Management

As the York Consulting evaluation showed, the experience, ability and continuity at manager level is crucial. There are examples of managers with a regeneration background. There are signs that LP teams are growing with posts funded from various sources including regeneration funds.

Teams of anything from one manager working alone up to four and five are mentioned, funded from various sources including SRB, including secondment from FE, Skills and Knowledge Co-ordinator, Marketing and Communications Officer, modern apprentices, project managers. There are a small number of managers drawn from backgrounds which would support the regeneration remit. These include Health, Town Planning with economic development and regeneration experience, a regeneration post in a TEC. One odd little comment suggests one LP has some difficulties because they have an all female team in an area where there is a very male culture in education locally!

A.4.5 Previous history of partnership working in the area

Some partnerships had a head start because of previous experience and organisations and where managers stayed with the new arrangements as LPs. Several have held the same manager from the inception of Learning Partnerships. Continuity, and especially effective and continuous partnership activity, breeds the habit of collaboration. It is likely that successful Partnerships on one area of activity move successfully into new roles. Obviously LPs also can take on the history of failed relationships or damaged

collaboration. One LP explains that it is still suffering from the hangover of Local Government re-organisation. Another claims that the origins of the Partnership are “shrouded in mystery”.

Growth points for Partnerships which were in place before 1999 include a Community Learning Forum, a Community for Learning Partnership, a Lifelong Learning Strategic Partnership, a widening participation partnership.

A.4.6 How has the Partnership generally positioned itself among the other local players?

Most have positioned themselves effectively with the usual local agencies. There is one example where the LP has income from subscriptions and several feel they are well enough positioned to support themselves from projects if necessary. It is quite idiosyncratic how links have been made - e.g. one LP which is successful in all sorts of links but shut out of the ‘Aim Higher Partnerships for Progression’ developments. 14-19 strategy seems to cause a good deal of friction within LPs.

Key phrases from responses

Identified a 'cradle to grave' role and a forum for learning issues in the area.

Established under the LSP.

Strategic working with Borough Local Authority.

Recognised as the learning arm of the LSP.

High level representation.

Working with LSC on 16-19 action plan, Basic Skills plan.

LEA takes all relevant issues through LP.

Building position after a slow start with part time managers, now gaining credibility.

LP sees itself as an enabler not running projects etc, no image to public, eg sets up Community Learning Forums, finds support and lets them run with support. Subscriptions provide £50,000 a year income. Support for LP would keep it going if there were no LSC funding.

Main role was project commissioning until a full time manager was appointed.

LP has become the meeting place for the range of agencies.

LP operates as a forum for neutral debate and strategic planning. Operational Plans belong to providers.

Strong and continuing involvement from senior people.

LP identifies three drivers: specialist part of LSP, LLSC objectives, Area Inspection and outcomes 16-19.

All the major players are on the Board but as a voluntary structure LP cannot be a planning organisation.

LP is a planning forum, strategic role working with LSC, steering group for Strategic Area Review. Cross representation links with the funded LSP by accident.

LP sees new chair – Chief Constable - as way to become better positioned.

GO only recognised sub regional groupings for funding and this has supported LP position.

Wide representation on Board and broadening towards workforce development agencies. Sees role as providing "hardware" for collaboration, supporting objectives of LLSC, LSEP, LSPs through collaborative action. Track record of running large scale collaborative projects for LLSC and NRF – total 2002/3 £1.75m going through LP directly or partners as partnership programmes, taking management fees to build infrastructure.

Concerns

Tensions over 14-19.

Role is limited by unwillingness to give up autonomy. LP is political football between LLSC and LEA.

LP has concerns that LSC funding may affect relationships with other regional agencies.

A.4.7 How effective are the Partnership links to other players?

There is a range of supportive organisations. It is not possible to be prescriptive or to predict those which will be most helpful. There are examples of supportive LEAs and difficult LEAs; LLSCs who are extremely positive and those who really do not want to make the link.

Weaknesses

14-19 tensions make position difficult, 14-19 is a nightmare.

Some problems because LLSC cuts across 2 LPs.

Most difficult is the LSP which gets most funding.

No formal relationship with City LSP. Does not have nominated presence on other LSPs

Problem is how to link to 9 LSPs.

LSP in area is in developmental stage, LP manager has been asked to be a member and draft community plan.

Some LSPs do not have any reference to learning on their agendas as yet.

LLSC more problematic and inconsistent. Strong links over Area Inspection, sporadic and unsatisfactory communication. Not impressed by quality of LLSC staff.

The relationship between economic underpinning and education is still to be worked out.

Strengths

Protocol in place with LSC, all senior LEA staff attend LP meetings.

Strength of much cross representation in a small borough.

Links strong to LEA – host for LP – included on lots of groups.

Links to LEA, FE and Connexions effective.

Links to LLSC variable but constructive.

Connexions close, LEA very close, FE at development stage.

Well established and effective links but there is a risk of being seen as the arm of any particular agency particularly LSC now that funding route has changed.