

Report to Essex Management Board, 24 July 2008

Essex Local Area Agreement 2006/08: results and lessons learned

Report by: Gill Butterworth, Performance and Improvement Manager, Essex County Council

1. Purpose

This report provides unaudited results for the first Local Area Agreement (LAA), in place from April 2006 until March 2008, an analysis in terms of overall achievement and examples of where the LAA has already made a real difference to people's lives in Essex.

It also draws together some of the learning from the delivery of the first LAA and outlines how this has been taken forward in the design of the new Agreement, with recommendations for further action required.

2. Achievement

A key benefit of the first LAA – cited by all of the four thematic 'block' partnerships responsible for delivery – has been the impetus it has given to improved partnership working in Essex, strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones to deliver shared priorities. The overarching governance arrangements set up to support delivery of the first Agreement also provided a new forum where escalated concerns and issues could be considered, for example a bid for additional funding to support Essex Innovation Network programmes.

Indicators in themselves clearly provide only one part of the picture in assessing achievement in delivery of the Partnership's priorities, albeit an important quantifiable assessment of whether we are delivering improvements across a range of agreed measures and whether the actions we put in place are having the desired impact on the results. The learning from 'what works' in terms of how and where to focus activity and interventions will be taken by all thematic partnerships into the new LAA.

The Dashboard (appendix A) shows at a headline level results for those targets where the 2007/08 data is available, presented by the four thematic 'blocks'. The table below shows the degree of improvement across the indicators from 2006/07 to 2007/08 and the extent to which interim targets were met.

LAA 2006/08	Total indicators	Possible to compare (see note)	△ (Improved)	◁▷ (Same)	▽ (Worsened)
Improvement since 2006/07	90	46 45	30 (65%) 39 (87%)	3 (7%) 0	13 (28%) 6 (13%)
Achievement against 2007/08 targets	90	70 69	Y (Met) 49 (70%) 49 (71%)	N (Not met) 21 (30%) 20 (29%)	

Note: The main reasons for being unable to compare year on year and against target are the introduction of new indicators for 2007/08, changes in definition, results not being comparable over the two years and 2007/08 results not yet available.

Note: headline figures subsequently updated to reflect improvement 'in line with agreed plan'

There are a number of notable achievements underlying this information, where partners have worked closely together to drive improved performance over the period of the LAA. Examples are:

- Essex Casualty Reduction Board's successful 'Driving Casualties Down' campaign contributed to a reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on Essex's roads with 103 fewer casualties in 2007 than in 2006 – the lowest recorded level. This was achieved by targeting enforcement on routes and drivers at most risk, supported by education and publicity campaigns. The strategies and interventions continue.
- Since we established the 'InvestEssex' team, the number of jobs saved and created through foreign direct investment has seen a marked increase from 23 jobs in 2006/07 to 393 in 2007/08.
- Continued improvement in recycling rates, which partners working closely through the Essex Waste Management Partnership have increased from 34.2% in 2006/07 to 38% in 2007/08. Challenging improvement targets have been agreed as part of the new LAA, with a rate of 43% by 2010/11.
- The use of learning mentors in schools with a history of a high proportion of children who leave without going into full time education, training or employment has helped 'turn the curve' and contributed to improved performance from 12.8% in the 2006/07 academic year to 7% in 2007/08.
- Sanction detection rates for domestic violence have improved from 54% in 2006/07 to 61% in 2007/08 – achieved through working with Essex Police to raise the profile of this issue, frequent review of performance information and agreeing targets at local level.

Full details of the results for individual indicators are at Appendix B, which shows more detail of progress in delivering improved performance across the range of targets agreed to support delivery of each priority. District level results are included where we have these.

Reward targets

With the exception of two indicators completing in 2007/08, the bulk of the designated reward targets in the first LAA remain. These are summarised in Appendix C, grouped by the Thematic Partnership it is suggested is best placed to take ongoing responsibility for delivery.

Two targets completed in 2007/08, the number of unscheduled acute hospital bed days (Pr4T2) and the number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) on Essex's roads (Pr9T1). Unaudited results shows that the hospital bed days target was met in full (£3.082m) and the KSI target achieved 66.4% of the stretch target and so the same proportion of the reward grant (£3.082m x 66.4% = £2.046m).

3. Issues and lessons learned

Governance and delivery arrangements

Consultation with partners identified the need to revise the governance arrangements to make these more inclusive and effective. This has been done, with the establishment of the Essex Partnership Forum in December 2007 as the Countywide LSP, comprising representatives from 72 partner organisations and existing county wide partnerships, and a new Essex Management Board.

Delivery of the first Agreement was done through four thematic 'blocks'. Partners expressed the view that the block structure did not support cross-cutting working and was unnecessarily duplicative of existing partnerships. Responding to this feedback, the thematic base of the new LAA is being taken forward through six existing county-wide partnerships. The importance of continuing to build links across thematic partnerships and bringing the right people together on common issues is recognised, for example, through stakeholder action planning and performance improvement events.

Accountability and responsibility for delivery has been clearly defined in the Governance, Delivery and Performance Management Arrangements paper, which sets out the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the thematic partnerships, target leads, district LSPs, Essex Management Board and Essex Partnership Forum. This approach builds on the good practice and learning from implementing the first Agreement, where it was sometimes not clear who was responsible for what and as a result difficult to reinforce expectations.

Local engagement and capacity building

A key issue arising from the experience of the first Agreement was the need to make the delivery of improvements relevant and meaningful locally so that district Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) could interpret the LAA in their own area, and to help build capacity for delivery.

Partners have had a greater involvement in the development of the new Agreement, agreeing priorities, selecting indicators and confirming targets. Most targets in the new LAA are an aggregation of district level targets agreed by each LSP.

£2.7m of Performance Reward Grant from the first LAA has been allocated to LSPs over five years to help develop capacity to engage with the local community and to co-ordinate partnership working to deliver locally agreed targets. Overall £15m has been allocated on an indicative basis across LSPs and thematic partnerships to encourage bids for projects that will contribute to delivery of the agreed priorities and targets.

Indicator definition

There were a number of poorly defined indicators in the first LAA, indicators relating to improvement which was hard to deliver or influence, and indicators where data was unavailable or took time to establish. Only tried and tested indicators from the first LAA have been taken forward into the new Agreement, and the new LAA contains a greater proportion of indicators from the National Indicator Set, which should be more robust, available and allow us to benchmark progress with others.

The experience of the first Agreement showed that it was difficult to influence perception indicators and demonstrate a correlation between our activity or intervention and the impact on perception. However, three overarching 'strategic indicators' will be used in the new Agreement, together with other perception indicators, to assess progress against delivering the overall vision of the Essex Strategy - to improve the quality of life.

Action planning

There has been a greater focus in the new Agreement on action plans and the quality of these. Action plans were in place for the first LAA but these were of variable quality, were not always shared or owned, and there was a tendency to 'manage the indicators' and what could be measured rather than manage improvement activity. Robust and dynamic action plans are particularly important where in year monitoring data is not readily available.

We recognise the need to improve risk assessment, with a move away from assessing risks to the delivery of targets, to assessing risks to the delivery of the agreed action plans. Equality Impact Assessments have also been introduced for the new LAA to ensure that no member of the community is disadvantaged or excluded as a result of our actions.

Performance improvement

And finally, we have strengthened the role of the Performance Management Sub Group. This group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable, provides a cross-partnership forum for reviewing and challenging the extent to which we are delivering our priorities. In its early days the Group will review and build on the performance management arrangements in place for the first Agreement and develop an appropriate and rigorous approach to performance review.

4. Recommendations

Thematic Partnership Chairs are asked to confirm that they will take responsibility for ensuring that arrangements are in place to manage the delivery of ongoing reward targets (Appendix C)

It is proposed to forward this report to GOEast for information.

Attachments:

- Appendix A Essex LAA 2006/08 Dashboard (2007/08 results)
- Appendix B Essex LAA 2006/08 Outturn Report (2007/08 results)
- Appendix C Essex LAA 2006/08 Reward Targets (2007/08 results)