

**Brent's Local Area Agreement (LAA)**  
**Six-month Review**  
**November 2006.**

**Summary of Progress.**

**Introduction**

This report demonstrates the progress made by the London Borough of Brent and its partners on the Local Strategic Partnership in delivering their priorities within the Brent Local Area Agreement. Brent's LAA was formally signed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2006 and this report covers the first six months of implementation from April – September 2006. The report will cover the steps that have been taken at both the strategic level of the LSP Executive to strengthen the structures and mechanisms that support effective joint working and, at the detailed operational level, to improve services and achieve enhanced performance targets.

In May 2006 as a result of the local government elections a new coalition administration was formed by the Liberal Democrat and Conservative political groups on Brent Council. This new Executive have supported the priorities identified by the LSP and are committed to delivering the shared aims of the LAA. The new Corporate Strategy 2006-2010 incorporates the LAA performance priorities and targets being designed to drive forward local community priorities in partnership with other public service agencies, the business sector and community and voluntary groups.

Brent's agreement is a single pot LAA constructed to deliver the ambitions and community priorities within our new Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2010. It is a wide-ranging and comprehensive set of objectives focused on delivering our shared vision for the future quality of life experienced by all people living and working in Brent.

**Brent's Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2010**

Our vision for Brent is that it will be a prosperous and lively borough, full of opportunity and welcoming to all; a place that will thrive for generations to come whose future will be determined by local people.

Together we are committed to:

- delivering efficient, accessible and sustainable services to excellent standards;
- developing tailored solutions to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities; and
- celebrating our borough's diversity and building upon our national reputation for nurturing successful community cohesion.

The Strategy is streamlined and structured around three simple, unambiguous, but challenging cross cutting ambitions to make Brent:

- a great place;
- a borough of opportunity; and

- an inclusive community.

Our 'great place' ambition expresses our shared commitment to make Brent safe, clean, green and lively, prioritising efforts to:

- reduce the fear of crime and the impact of violent crime and robberies;
- prevent offending, through youth inclusion projects, addressing housing needs and promoting drug and alcohol treatment;
- provide clean, well designed and cared-for streets and open spaces;
- ensure access to parks and open spaces which are rich in wildlife and offer a variety of activities; and to
- promote access to cultural and leisure facilities and services.

Our 'borough of opportunity' ambition details shared commitment to make Brent a prosperous and healthy place where there are opportunities for all, notably:

- creating a place where businesses want to locate and can succeed;
- ensuring that local people fill local jobs, boosting the economy and household income; and
- reducing the gap in life expectancy across the Borough and promoting health and wellbeing.

Our 'inclusive community' ambition focuses on our shared commitment to respond to the needs of young and old alike, supporting them to achieve independence and encouraging them to take a full part in the life of the Borough. This section focuses on:

- securing settled homes for the large number of families with children based in temporary accommodation;
- supporting those children and young people whom experience the greatest barriers to learning, experience transient lives, live within priority neighbourhoods or low-income households and/or whom have additional or acute needs; and
- ensuring that residents have an opportunity to take part in the life of the borough.

Additionally, the Strategy provides the local strategic partnership with a clear framework for strategic planning, not just for partnership activity but within the individual public, private, voluntary and community sector agencies.

### **Reducing Inequalities.**

Throughout our LAA there is a strong focus on reducing inequalities - in employment, health, achievement and the environment. There are new ways to tackle old problems – for instance the preventive work with children and our proposals for a sustainable solution for temporary accommodation. Our headline outcomes are mutually reinforcing - with sport and leisure making a significant contribution to our crime and disorder, public health and quality of life agendas. Our value for money measures are designed to release resources to invest in new need. As a partnership we intend to continue to operate in an inclusive, responsive and accountable manner

The following sections of this report will cover:

- Progress against our six headline outcomes including the stretch targets which underpin the headline objectives;
- Enhancements to our arrangements for performance management of partnerships.
- Expenditure on LAA priorities
- Performance in our wider outcomes framework.

## **HEADLINE OUTCOMES**

Brent's LAA is structured around six headline outcome areas each with a cluster of projects and indicators designed to operate as the LAA's delivery programmes. Their objective is to turn our Community Strategy ambitions into reality, capturing the key aspirations of our strategic service partnership's individual agendas and drawing them together. The six headline outcome areas:

1. Welcoming streets & parks: To tackle the public anxiety and fear of crime that currently undermines confidence in using public spaces and engaging in the life of the borough.
2. Access to leisure: To increase participation in sporting and cultural activities, not only to improve the health of those in the borough but to maximise broader social outcomes such as lifelong learning and community cohesion.
3. Local employment: To support those who are further away from the labour market to move into work and towards independence. Key beneficiaries will include those incapacity benefits, ex-offenders, a physical disabilities, a mental handicap or in temporary accommodation.
4. Longer, healthier lives: To address health inequalities, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods, and to promote the choosing health agenda through actions to promote healthy eating and physical activity, to improve sexual and mental wellbeing and to reduce injuries and substance misuse.
5. Settled homes: To tackle Brent's high levels of dependency on temporary accommodation. This proposal includes an innovative freedom & flexibility which would allow part of the public subsidy to be invested in purchase of additional social housing.
6. Early success: To establish a new project designed to support children with additional needs. The project will involve carrying out a comprehensive assessment and provide a tailored package of support services.

The following section outlines the progress made during April – September 2006 in taking forward the aims within our headline outcomes.

### **Welcoming Streets and Parks**

Our welcoming streets and parks projects are focused upon tackling the public anxiety and fear of crime that currently undermines confidence in using public spaces and engaging in the life of the borough. They take an integrated approach addressing a number of complimentary strands covering:-

- Provision of high visibility public reassurance services such as the council warden services, the police Safer Neighbourhood Teams and CCTV operation.
- Reducing violent crime in the borough particularly gun enabled crime and domestic violence.
- Measures to address anti-social behaviour.
- Reducing the number of accidental fires in dwellings.
- Actions to tackle enviro-crime and create high quality public spaces and streets.
- Improving the level of street cleanliness.
- Better operational integration of the council's environmental management functions and local Police services.

### **Up-date on activities related to the project.**

These issues are a high political priority and regularly top the list of residents' concerns during local public consultation. Creating a great place to live and work is at the heart of our community priorities and Brent Council Members have reflected this within their soon to be adopted Corporate Strategy 2006-2010.

Progress during the first six months of the LAA has been steady with improvements made in the joint working and management structures between the council's community safety team, environmental functions and police services. These have included:-

- Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) are now operational in all wards with the Council funding 2 additional police officers in Harlesden and Stonebridge from NRF and South Kilburn from NDC funds. Each ward has a dedicated Streetcare officer linked to the SNT to respond to environmental incidents and participate in joint service planning and priority setting for the ward.
- Council officers from community safety and the wardens services are attending the Police's monthly intelligence meeting to share information and develop joint operational planning of services across the borough.
- The Brent Council CCTV control room has now been established as the operational centre for the council's control system. It is linked to the police and co-staffed by council and police officers. This is generally considered to be working well.
- Multi-agency solutions aimed at tackling specific local problems such as anti-social behaviour have also been addressed through initiatives at a ward level. These have included a dispersal order in a park and

providing youth workers on school buses. This is a key area for future development with the council's Executive exploring new options for the development of neighbourhood working structures.

### **Performance April – September 2006**

During the first six month period of the LAA there have been positive improvements in the outcome indicators related to the 'welcoming streets and Park' theme. These are notability in the following areas:-

- The single aggregated crime figure covering the national basket of 10 crime indicators recorded a 3.4% decrease in reported crime within the borough for the period April to September 2006 compared with the same period for 2005.
- There has been a small decrease in the number of gun enabled crimes in the borough during April to September 2006. Performance was more positive in the early months of the period, however August to September saw a significant increase in gun activity. This is a critical issue for the local community and plans to take forward a mediation project aimed at reducing conflict that can lead to violent crime are part of our proposals for the second year of our LAA.
- We have seen a steady reduction in the numbers of racial harassment offences reported to police (33% decrease) and an improvement in the sanctioned detection rate for these offences.
- We are on track to achieve our targets for the reduction of numbers of first time entrants to the youth justice system and 90% of young offenders are being supervised by youth offending teams within full-time education, training or employment.

The council is continuing to address the performance of mainstream environmental services with a specific focus on improving the street scene to create a welcoming, safe and attractive public environment. Improvements in performance have included:-

- There has been an overall reduction in the numbers of abandoned vehicles being reported and an improvement in the percentage being investigated within 24 hours to 97%. However there has been a slight decrease in the proportion removed within 24 hours to 73% from 75%.
- Performance on the removal of fly-tips within 24 hours remained below the target of 1 day during the both quarters to below the target at an average six monthly figure of 0.96 days.
- The borough experienced a higher than anticipated increase in reports of incidents of graffiti during the summer months resulting in 26% of land being accessed as having unacceptable levels. Members responded with the allocation of additional resources for graffiti removal and preventative work with the police and community safety teams. This has resulted in 74% of graffiti incidents now being removed within 6 weeks during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the period, although the average six month performance is below the target at 62%.

### **Stretch Targets**

There are three stretch targets related to the 'Welcoming Streets and Parks' theme. These are:-

1. Reducing the number of accidental fires in residential properties
2. a) Increasing the percentage of domestic violence incidents where a suspects is present and an arrest is made.  
b) Increasing the percentage of domestic violence incidents which result in sanctioned detection.
3. The proportion of land assessed as having unacceptable levels of litter and detritus. (BV 199a)

#### *Residential Fires*

Work on the successful programmes to reduce fires and deaths or injury from fires have continued during the first six months of the LAA. These projects are a continuation of the schemes established under the LPSA round 1 and have delivered a year on year improvement in these indicators. During the April to September 2006 period this trend continued with 127 accidental fires in the borough against an anticipated 138. This means we are well placed to achieve the annual target.

#### *Domestic Violence.*

There have been early successes on the stretch target for reducing domestic violence related to this headline priority. In 80% of domestic violence incidents where a suspect was present an arrest was made. This places us well on track to achieve the annual target for 2006/07. The overall trend for sanctioned detections is also upwards with 32% of DV incidents now resulting in a sanctioned detection.

#### *Street Cleanliness*

Our performance on the cleanliness of streets indicator has been variable over the past six months. The average figure for the period is currently 30 % of land and streets have unacceptable levels of litter and detritus. However performance for just prior to the start of the LAA period had shown a trend for improved ENCAMS scores and was at 26% on a downward trend. We are working closely with ENCAMS to develop consistent assessment criteria to use within our own monitoring procedures. Actions to improve performance on this key stretch target are detail below in Future Plans.

#### **Future Plans for Welcoming Streets and Parks**

Our future plans to take forward this headline outcome are as follows:-

- We will continue to improve the operational delivery of the council's public reassurance schemes and the Police's Safer Neighbourhood Teams through joint planning and deployment of resources. This is underpinned by a common performance management framework composed of a basket of shared measures including crime figures and environmental incidents. This information is reported to the Operational sub-Group of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. This is known as the CPSG Target Tracker and a copy is appended with the project plan for this outcome area. (Appendix A)

- We have submitted a bid to the Government's Invest to Save – Inclusive Communities Budget for the establishment of a mediation project. The aim of this project is to provide a mediation service to reduce escalation of anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood disputes and focus on reduction of the conflict that can lead to more serious violent crime.
- The council is currently re-tendering its waste management and street cleaning contract. Measures to achieve the stretch target of 81% of streets achieving the ENCAMS cleanliness score are being built into the contract specification. We are also assessing the physical condition of the roads and pavements and the impact this has on street cleaning and maintenance. Where possible the Council will make capital investment in local streets to facilitate more effective cleaning and maintenance.

### **Access to Leisure**

Our projects to increase participation in sports activities contribute to a range of positive local benefits including better health and well-being, community cohesion and engagement of young and older people. The programme is specifically aimed at a number of groups who currently have lower levels of participation in sport or physical activity. These cover:-

- Encouraging more young people to use council owned leisure facilities.
- Increasing the number of adults taking part in sport or physical activity at least three times a week.
- Increasing participation of under represented groups such as children with disabilities, looked after children and older people.

Over the past six months the Council has made significant changes to the way in which sports and leisure services are provided. This has included:-

- Re-tendering the leisure contract for sports provision within our two main sports centres – Vale Farm and Willesden.
- Opening the new Willesden Sports Centre
- Bringing back in house the smaller Charteris Sports centre and redefining the package of activities available.
- Up-grading the facilities available within Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre.

These developments have specifically addressed our LAA objectives through greater emphasis on reflecting the needs of children and young people within our leisure provision. Actions have included:-

- Providing free swimming during Easter, Whitsun, Summer and October school holidays 2006.
- Provision of free swimming included within Leisure Management specification for Vale farm sports centre to be implemented from November 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 when new contract commences
- Vale Farm contract negotiations clarified position regarding the level and range of activities to be provided for young people

- Negotiated with Leisure Connection to provide free swimming for juniors during the school holidays from February 2006 until February 2007 (excluding Christmas holidays). Further negotiation will be required after this period.
- Vale Farm, Charteris and Bridge Park Community Leisure centre provided programme of activities during the summer holiday for young people
- Charteris sports centre to be brought back-in house from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006 to be managed by Sports Service so we will have direct control over the programme of activities for young people and it's publicity and promotion.
- Opening of the new Willesden Sports Centre in November 2006.

### **Performance**

These actions have already achieved a significant increase in the numbers of young people participating in sport and physical activity within council sports centres. During the first quarter of the period there were 11,656 visits made by young people to council sports centres, rising to 17,091 during the summer quarter June to September 2006. The total for the period was 28,747 making us well on track to achieving our annual LAA target of 33,800 for 2006/07.

We have a specific focus on encouraging looked after children to participate in local sports and leisure services. Work is ongoing to provide looked after children and their carers with information on activities available locally and making them more affordable through a voucher scheme and issuing free B.active cards for young people leaving care (17 and over). Consultation is taking place with looked after children on the particular interest and activities they would like to see within the programme of activities provided.

The programme to increase adult physical activity is being delivered in collaboration with the PCT and will include the creation of additional exercise classes in accessible locations such as workplaces, community locations and care settings. The objective is to make exercise available to those people who may not consider using a gym and to integrate physical activity to every day activities such as healthy walks in our parks. This will be combined with a publicity campaign on the B.active discount scheme, the range of new facilities now available in the borough and the long-term health benefits of increased physical activity. This indicator is measured by the triennial Sport England Active People Survey which will be used to establish the baseline for performance in November 2006. We will then be in a position to set specific targets for increasing adult physical activity within the borough.



## **Local Employment**

Our priorities around increasing local employment are focused on supporting those residents who experience the most difficulty in accessing the labour market helping them to move into work and towards independence. The LAA local employment objectives are integral to the council's mainstream regeneration activities and are being delivered through the work programme of our employment agency Brentin2 Work. This umbrella organisation works with a range of local training and employment providers matching unemployed residents to unfilled vacancies.

The critical focus of our work in the first six months of the LAA has been developing our outreach programmes to ensure that we are reaching those people who want to work and require most support to do so. Our partnership structures and relations with front line service providers are central to this approach, providing effective referral from their contacts with local people. In addition the Households into Employment programme works directly with unemployed residents in Stonebridge, St.Raphael's and Brentfield neighbourhoods to put in place tailored packages which support the most disadvantaged groups into employment.

The support provided covers a range of needs including:-

- Development of English language skills and job search techniques.
- Work training for refugees and accreditation of previous qualifications.
- Employment support to unemployed construction workers.
- Working with employers to put in place tailored training packages and guaranteed job interviews for trainees at the end of the training period.
- A specific focus on local projects for disadvantage groups including ex-offenders, residents on incapacity benefits and the homeless.

## **Performance against the stretch targets**

There are two stretch targets related to this headline outcome:-

1. The numbers of people from BME groups helped into work for a sustained period of at least 16 hours per week for 13 consecutive weeks or more.
2. The number of people from a disadvantaged group (excluding BME) helped into work for a sustained period of at least 16 hours a week for 13 consecutive weeks or more.

The employment rate in Brent is currently stable at 68% with an average borough unemployed claimant count of 4.3%, although the rate within our priority neighbourhoods is 8.3%. The stable overall employment rate demonstrates the positive impact regeneration initiatives are achieving within the borough and we aim to retain and improve on this performance during the life of the LAA. The Brent Regeneration Strategy commits us to reducing the borough average claimant count to that of the wider London economy at approximately 3.3%. The Brent LAA is central to achieving to this ambition by placing an additional 1,575 people into employment by 2008.

The first six-months of the LAA have seen strong performance on the target related to the number of people from BME groups securing employment. A total of 368 people were supported through Brentin2 Work into sustainable employment in the period against a target of 200. Performance for people from disadvantaged groups was not as positive and we believe that we are not effectively monitoring the take-up of employment services by these groups. Despite a disappointing start we are making improvements to the data capture systems and are confident that we will be able to achieve the stretch target by 2009.

### **Future Plans.**

- Brent in2 Work will have an even greater focus on supporting the most disadvantaged residents in our priority areas by extending the reach of its Outreach Service. The service will offer high quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) and will link to One Stop Shops, Housing Benefit service and Children's Centres. Frontline staff within these services will be trained to refer workless clients to appropriate employment support.
- Overcoming ESOL barriers to work will continue to be tackled through the Language 2 Work project. There will be a demand-led and sector specific focus to vocational training through both the Recruitment and Training service and the Building One Stop Shop to ensure residents are best placed to take advantage of emerging employment opportunities on Wembley.
- Efforts to improve the local economy will be dependent on the success of our LEGI bid. If successful, our work will be driven by four key workstreams:
  - Enterprise education and raising aspirations
  - Encouraging entrepreneurship
  - Promoting innovation and growth
  - Improving the (business) environment for inward investment

### **Longer, healthier lives**

Brent residents must have the best possible chance of a long, fulfilling and healthy life. However as a borough there are wide differences in the health and life expectancy experienced by our residents. The average life expectancy for men in the borough is 76.5 years, while in Harlesden it is 71.8 years and in Northwick Park it is 82.9 years – over 10 years difference. For women the average is 82.3 years, ranging from 78.4 years in Harlesden to 85.9 years in Dudden Hill.

Our challenge is to reduce the gap in life expectancy and improve the opportunities available for all people to make healthy life choices. Working closely with the Primary Care Trust, health care providers, council services and the community we are currently developing a partnership Health Strategy setting out specific targets to reduce health inequalities in the areas of greatest need and improve the overall level of public health for all communities in Brent. Consultation on the health priorities within the borough is currently taking place along side analysis of health trend data and

identification of the positive health impacts derived from mainstream service provision.

Our focus is on the preventative agenda with actions to encourage greater physical activity (covered in the access to leisure section) and promoting healthy eating and lifestyles at an early age through the expansion of the Healthy Schools programme.

### **Performance against stretch targets.**

There are two stretch targets related to this headline outcome. They are:-

1. a) To increase the number of people in disadvantaged areas quitting smoking for 4 weeks.  
b) To increase the number of people across the borough quitting smoking for 13 weeks.
2. Achieve 53 schools in Brent accredited to the national standard of Healthy Schools.

There have been very positive results so far on the numbers of people within NRF areas participating successfully in smoking cessation programmes. A total of 193 people were supported to stop smoking for at least 4 weeks during the April to September 2006 period. This places us well on track to achieve the annual target. Systems to track 13 week smoking quitters are currently under development and the performance on this target is at present below the year profile. We will be focussing on this longer, more challenging target with each cohort that moves through the programme.

Our annual target for 2006/7 for the number of schools holding Healthy School status is 42. We are over half way at this point in the year with 29 schools having successfully achieving the standard. The Healthy Schools Partnership Group is currently working with a further 33 schools on implementation of the criteria for accreditation.

### **Future Plans.**

We aim to launch the joint Brent Health Strategy in April 2007 and we will be projects to support it implementation as part of the re-refresh of our LAA for 2007/08. However the Primary Care Trust in Brent is experiencing significant financial pressures due to national savings targets. This will inevitably place severe restriction on their, and consequently our, joint ability to engage in preventative health work. These constraints need to be recognised and acknowledged as a major threat to our ability to deliver the health related targets within our LAA.

### **Settled Homes.**

In our original LAA submission Brent made an innovative proposal for reducing the dependence of families with children in temporary accommodation and supporting their movement into employment and settled homes. Brent's proposal was for a pilot project designed to divert the current Housing Benefit subsidy to private landlords into public-private partnership acquisition of street properties in order that families with dependant children in temporary accommodation can be moved into permanent settled homes with

affordable rents. The partners were to complement the scheme by providing support to the families in order that they can move off benefit and into work.

The pilot is designed to:-

- ensure more efficient and more appropriate use of significant public spend on temporary accommodation.
- Bring financial benefits to central and local government.
- Create sustainable affordable housing for the longer-term.
- Make incalculable contribution to the quality of life and well-being of the families concerned.

In order to implement the project we requested an enabling measure from the Treasury for which would divert a proportion of the public subsidy currently paid through Housing Benefit to private landlords into a public-private partnership acquisition vehicle to purchase additional social housing in Brent. This would facilitate families with children in temporary accommodation move into that permanent accommodation paying social rents (which would continue to be subsidised by Housing Benefit) and enable the adults in the household to move from benefit into work. There is no new cost to the exchequer and Brent estimate that the benefit to central and local government would be up to £100 million over 30 years.

To date we have been unable to resolve a successful permission for this freedom. We have been disappointed that progress from the Treasury and The Department for Work and Pensions to productively resolve this issue has been slow. We are still keen to participate in negotiations and remain committed to the project as the most cost effective solution to creating more families within settled homes and improving their long-term economic and social well-being. We would request that actions are taken by GOL and DCLG as part of the annual refresh of the LAA to bring the discussion on creating settled homes to a successful outcome.

### **Early Success.**

We believe that every child in Brent is entitled to the best start in life in a safe, healthy environment with access to excellent facilities to learn, play and develop to their full potential. Central to our vision for the future of Brent are our programmes to support and enhance the long-term life chances of all children and young people within the borough.

Our headline outcome related to securing early success contains three inter-related projects covering:-

- Implementation of the extended schools offer across primary and secondary schools.
- Improving the educational achievement of looked after children.
- The Early Success Stonebridge Programme – a pilot project to provide a common assessment framework across agencies and facilitate preventative services better tailored to children and their families needs.

### *Extended Schools*

Our LAA project for extended schools is focused on accelerating the rate at which schools are able to provide the 'core offer' of activities and services through support to access additional funding streams. This will be achieved through provision of an additional Funding Officer post to work with clusters of schools and their voluntary and community partners to put in place suitable projects and funding arrangements that deliver the extended schools programme.

Our target for 2006/7 was to have 15 schools offering access to the core offer of extended schools. To date we have achieved 18 and have had a positive response from schools who welcome support with accessing additional sources of revenue. We will be recruiting into the new post in December 2006 and we believe this will underpin achievement of the stretch target of 68 primary schools and 16 secondary schools providing extended services by 2009.

### *Improved Educational Achievement of Looked After Children*

The educational achievement of looked after children is consistently below the average local levels of attainment, which limits the opportunities and life chances of looked after children when leaving care. We want to maximise the opportunities available to looked after children, through the provision of individual packages which support their educational attainment. We are working closely with schools (both within Brent and where children may be placed out of borough) through the 'Designated Teacher' scheme. This provides training for teachers to support looked after children in mainstream school settings. Each Year 11 looked after child will have a personal education plan in place setting out their specific needs and targets. This is monitored by the designated educational case work and regularly discussed and reviewed with the child, social worker and foster carer.

Plans are in place to set-up during November 2006 a weekly homework club specifically for Year 11 looked after children with booster classes and supported revision being in place for 2007.

The first cohort of students to which the LAA stretch target relates will be taking their GCSE's in the summer of 2007. Performance information is therefore not currently available for this group and previous year's performance is not directly comparable.

### *The Early Success Stonebridge Programme*

The Early Success programme is an innovative multi-agency project designed to bring together co-ordinated preventative support for children, young people, and families with additional needs. It has three elements:-

- Development of a cross agency common assessment framework.
- Developing the concept and role of a 'lead professional' within multi-agency packages to co-ordinate the services for individuals.
- Creation of the integrated services group – a new mechanism for co-ordinating preventative services across agencies.

### **Up-date on activities related to the project.**

During the first six months of the LAA good progress has been made in establishing the cross agency management structures necessary for the delivery of this project. This includes:-

- Establishing the inter-agency Strategic Implementation Group for the project which meets every six weeks.
- Setting up the operational Integrated Service Coordination Group who agree the individual packages of support, determine the level of need, and agree the lead professional for each client.
- Appointment of a coordinator and two lead professionals for the programme.
- Over 60 practitioners from the local authority, health sector and voluntary organisations working with children in Stonebridge have been trained in the new approach and a Practitioners Forum is being established to spread understanding of integrated provision and the common assessment framework.

The desired outcomes from the early success project are obviously of a longer term nature and will be carefully evaluated as part of assessing the impact of our LAA. However there has been initial positive feedback from both families and children and practitioners within the Stonebridge area over the first six months. Early indications of the impacts the project is achieving include:-

- Improvement in cross-agency understanding of the services available within a locality and practitioners ability to access appropriate services provided by other agencies.
- A more holistic understanding of the needs of children and families within the Stonebridge area and the possible options and solutions available.
- Stronger partnership working across service providers, better sharing of information and knowledge between the statutory agencies and community and voluntary groups.
- Commissioning of culturally appropriate services from the local voluntary and community sector which has strengthened capacity and provided better services to local families.
- Improvement in the speed from assessment to services being received. This is on average 4 weeks, although this can be quicker depending on meeting cycles.
- Schools engaged in the pilot have been both supportive and impressed with the ease and speed of the process for the common assessment framework (CAF).

To date there have been 26 pre CAF submissions of which 11 full assessments have been completed. 6 have been assessment at level 2 and provided with packages of support and a lead professional to co-ordinate services. The project plans to work with 100 families in the Stonebridge area.

### **Promoting Volunteering within the Borough**

Creating more opportunities for civic engagement and formal volunteering is critical to building the capacity of the voluntary sector in Brent. While there is a diverse and thriving voluntary sector within the borough, prior to the LAA there was no formal Volunteering Bureau which could match people and skills to the voluntary opportunities across organisations in Brent.

Our stretch target on volunteering seeks to address three elements:-

- To raise the profile of volunteering in Brent
- To build the capacity of volunteer involving organisations in Brent to enable them to more effectively recruit and retain volunteers
- To broker formal volunteering opportunities particularly targeting people without qualification, people from BME communities and people with long term and limiting illnesses.

The project is being delivered by Brent Association for Voluntary Action and is jointly funded by the LAA pump-priming funds and ChangeUp funding. As this is a completely new area of work the first six months have been focused on establishing the management of the Volunteer Bureau and creating a baseline position for monitoring the stretch target. These actions are now complete, with a Brent Volunteer co-ordinators forum inaugurated in October 2006. The purpose of the Forum is to work with volunteer involving organisations to identify volunteering opportunities and develop their capacity to involve new volunteers effectively.

### **Future Plans**

Plans are in place to hold outreach sessions with potential volunteers to develop awareness of the opportunities for volunteering. There is a specific focus on involving excluded groups and providing scope for developing future life skills as part of the volunteering experience. Although it is early in the life of this project 17 additional volunteers have been referred already and the necessary tracking systems are being put in place to monitor the outcomes of volunteer placements.

### **Reducing the time taken to process Benefit applications.**

Our final stretch target relates to a critical Council service which impacts on the life of many of our most vulnerable residents. The council has made significant improvements in the overall performance and efficiency of its services for housing and council tax benefits. The service has been rated as good by the BFI for two consecutive years and has made year on year improvements in the time taken to process new applications. However we are committed to achieving the highest standards of performance in this area with a target of 14 days by 2009. To achieve this stretch target we have provided additional staff to obtain supporting evidence from applicants to reduce potential delays in processing due to lack of information. This is part of our outreach activities to ensure our most vulnerable clients are able to provide all the necessary information as part of the verification process and that their benefits are paid promptly.

## **Performance**

During the first six months of the LAA performance on this indicator has continued to improve. Our annual performance for the year 2005/06 was 36 days which during April to September 2006 reduced to 33 days. We had anticipated that processing times may increase during this period due to the implementation of the new Verification Framework prior to declining in future months. This performance is therefore very encouraging and we hope to maintain and improve upon it in future months.

## **Partnership working**

During 2005 'Partners for Brent' led a refresh of the existing Community Plan, and developed the new Community Strategy 2006-10 providing a borough wide vision and policy framework for local agencies core strategies and the LAA 2006-09.

The Audit Commission's 2006 CPA corporate assessment found that Brent Council demonstrates strong community leadership through partnership working; however, it highlighted the need to improve the performance management role of partnerships. Consequently, during June 2006, the council commissioned the Audit Commission to review the developing performance management arrangements for partnership working, placing a particular focus on the area of health and crime and disorder reduction. The review found that partnership working is well established across services and client groups; however, performance management arrangements are still evolving.

During summer 2006, Brent Council on behalf of the local strategic partnership undertook a detailed mapping of local partnership arrangements. The mapping identified approximately 90 local and sub-regional partnerships involved in and influencing public service delivery. Similar to the Audit Commission review it found that local partnership arrangements are diverse, complex, and multi-faceted, spanning a range of decision-making, advisory and consultative functions. The mapping highlighted the varying levels of influence over service improvements alongside their limited performance and financial managerial capacity and systems.

During September '06 the Local Public Services Board (LPSB) endorsed a programme of activities to establish clearer and more transparent arrangements, notably concerning partnership governance, performance management and influence over the use of resources. The programme is underpinned by local standards, a partnership register, and induction and training resources that will provide:

- greater clarity over purpose, required membership, and function;
- a borough wide inter-agency policy framework, facilitating LAA development, strategic alignment of public services and maximising efficiency opportunities from shared services;
- a performance management framework, involving hierarchy of performance reporting and peer challenge of partners;



- renewed governance arrangements; and
- better use of the existing range of partnership administration and managerial resources.

From October 2006, local partnerships have begun to benchmark their position in terms of the new local standards. The standards will require all partnerships to have an up to date partnership agreement (including clear vision and objectives, performance indicators, financial regulations, management and administrative arrangements), risk assessment and exit strategy.

The LSP is also establishing a partnership register, as an on-line access point for basic information on partnerships, including reporting and delegation arrangements, alongside an electronic resource offering induction, training and skills development, guidance for partnership development and management, and mechanisms for evaluating effectiveness of partnerships, for example tool kits, resources and activities.

The LSP will lead the implementation of the standards, register and training resource across partner organisations and the LPSB will determine and oversee their implementation. Hence, the LPSB will perform a new regulatory role, strengthen performance management, and continue to champion key corporate initiatives of mutual benefit providing a more cohesive external relationship management function and community leadership role.

These actions are being underpinned by implementation of a web-based performance management system, Performanceplus (PMS). The council has purchased this system to improve the real-time collection, analysis and reporting of performance data including shared partnership targets. The system will be rolled out across the council by March 2007 and then extended to partner organisations. At present joint reporting is taking place for the LAA by data being forwarded to the Council from partners for entry on the performance system, we aim during 2007 for partners to be using the system directly for joint monitoring and performance management processes.

### **Expenditure on LAA priorities**

Following the successful outcome of Brent LSP first Local Public Service Agreement the partnership made the decision to re-invest the anticipated performance reward grant in our LAA priorities. Combined with the LAA pump priming grant Brent set aside approximately £5m for to support the implementation of the headline outcome projects and the stretch targets. In April 2006 the Executive agreed a package of funding over the three years of £3.7 million. The remaining funding is being held in reserve pending the outcome of the settled homes negotiations and for emerging priorities during the life of the LAA. Details of our LAA expenditure are set out in Appendix C of this report. The main points arising from our expenditure are as follows:-

- The LAA is on budget, so financial management of the programme so far has been good in respect of all partners.
- The low spend for the first half of the year reflects delays in partners claiming funds from the pools rather than lack of actual spending

- The central pool has not yet been exploited as a facility to redistribute resources though there are plans to do this more in future years of the agreement
- Pump priming grant and reward grant from the last LPSA is being used to kick start programmes based around the stretch targets, which are now almost all underway. The projects are being monitored for the value they provide in terms of cost of the improvements they will deliver in performance.
- The delay in confirmation of grant amounts, and the need to source this information from the DCLG led to uncertainty in the first few months and meant delays in some work commencing. We would hope in future years to receive a full schedule of grants actually included in the central pool before the start of the financial year in order to allow for better planning and certainty for services.

## LAA Mid-Year Report

### Finance Element

<b>Fund</b>	<b>2006/07 Allocation £m</b>	<b>½ Year Spend £m</b>	<b>Forecast £m</b>	<b>Variance between forecast and allocation £m</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Centrally Pooled (excluding Sure Start)	6.061	3.838	6.097	0.036	Relates to Safer, Stronger Communities – Action to be taken to reduce overspend.
Sure Start – Main Revenue	3.735	0.965	3.735	0	Transfers have not been made for the full half year yet.
Sure Start – Local Programme	2.101	0.148	2.101	0	Transfers have not been made for the full half year yet.
Pump Priming Funds	1.433	0.279	1.299	-0.134	Projects started later in year than initially planned.
Locally Pooled Funds	12.010	5.812	12.080	0.07	Small overspend on some social care grants.
Ring Fenced – Aligned Funds	16.895	7.183	16.938	0.043	Supporting People Programme forecast to overspend. Capital Sure Start fund spend not evenly spread throughout the year.
Aligned Council Funds	0.316	0.158	0.316	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42.552</b>	<b>18.383</b>	<b>42.567</b>	<b>0.015</b>	Small net overspend to be addressed through the LSP, and Strategic Finance Group.